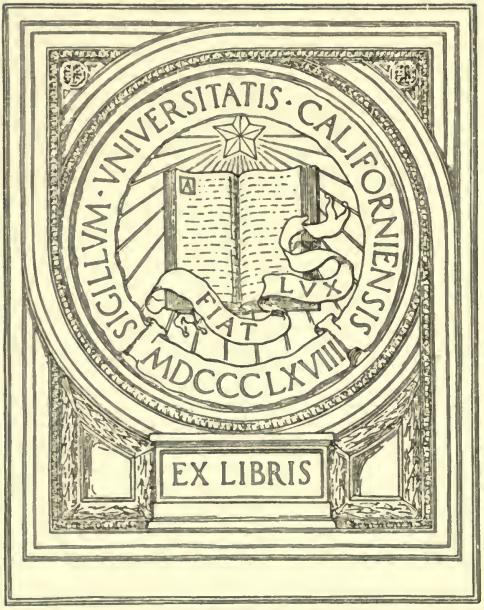
MR. BARNES *American*

ARCHIBALD CLAVERING GUNTER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Mr. Barnes, American

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A Sequel to
"Mr. Barnes of New York"

OF
CALIFORNIA

By
Archibald Clavering Gunter

Author of "Mr. Barnes of New York,"
"Mr. Potter of Texas," "That Frenchman," etc.

Illustrations by
B. Martin Justice

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BOOK I

CHAPTER I

THE SHOCK IN THE MARSEILLES DEPOT

"I WONDER if I can head off those cursed Corsican murder enthusiasts?" mutters Mr. Barnes of New York, as he stands on the deck of the French steamer with Marseilles looming up in the heat mist ahead of him.

It is a bright day upon the tideless Mediterranean. The waters of the landlocked sea ripple in silver waves beneath the rising sun this May morning of 1883, after the escape of the bridal party from Corsica.

Barnes has just arisen from the first night's sleep he has had in four days, and having got hold of his valise at Ajaccio and placed himself under the ship's barber this morning, now feels himself again—that is, American and normal.

There are very few passengers, Barnes's gold having sent the steamer back on her return voyage to Marseilles within two hours after her arrival at Ajaccio.

Being almost alone upon the deck, the American is rather careless of his attitude, and though Marseilles and the modern world are ahead of him, also London, where the beautiful Miss Enid Anstruther has promised to be his bride three days from now, his glance is turned contemplatively beyond the whirling, eddying wake of the propeller's foam toward that curious island of a semi-mediæval race, two hundred miles behind him, whose rugged mountain slopes and chestnut valleys are the home of that undying revenge that the Corsicans think is noble; that they worship, idealise and call "The Vendetta."

The representative of New York fashion, American sportsmanship and modern materialism, who has flitted to the island and plucked not only the young English lieutenant, Edwin Gerard Anstruther, but his bride, Marina, the daughter of the Paolis, from the meshes and entanglements of a feud that only ends with death, notwithstanding his reward is to be the hand of the beautiful girl he loves, emits a low, contemplative, melancholy whistle.

He mentally glances back and sees the house of Musso Danella in the moonlit chestnut groves of Bocognano, and Marina in her bride's gown with white *mandile* and *faldetta*, her sensitive, passionate face filled with that weird mixture of undying love and uncanny horror as she shuddered from the arms of the man she had just sworn to cleave to through

life and muttered: "Antonio's murderer!" Next he remembers the strange proof that brought back the wild happiness to the bride's face as she learnt there was no taint of her brother's blood on Edwin Anstruther, her husband; that her horrible belief was due to circumstantial evidence and the jealous and crafty plot of Musso Danella, her guardian, the man lying dead upon the floor of the bridal chamber, Tomasso's dagger in his heart; and then had fallen fainting into her bridegroom's arms.

With this, the mind of Mr. Barnes reverts to his desperate efforts to get the whole party to Ajaccio before the natives of the little commune of Bocognano learnt they had now another to avenge, and to the death of Marina's brother on the beach in the duello had been added that of Danella, their old-time friend, and to his peasants their kind *maestro* and proprietor.

Additional concern makes the face of the American even more grave as he mentally hears the distant ringing of the rifles on the mountain side as the carbineers shot old Tomasso Monaldi, who having become an assassin, had fled as a bandit, as the party made their weird ride to the Corsican seaport through the moonlight by the swift, white torrent of the Gravona River; though his expression is slightly relieved as he thinks of the triumph of his Yankee gold at Ajaccio that had turned back the

just-arrived Marseilles steamer so they could leave the island before the native spirit could be aroused to take vengeance on those whose coming had added two more dead for them to avenge in that undying passion that carries a feud even to uncles, cousins and the most distant of those who bear the name or the blood.

"If no deaths had followed the appearance of Marina's husband and me in the island, perhaps the accursed affair might have slumbered and died out," reflects Barnes, gloomily; "as it is, there's no telling where the devilish thing may end. If they have money enough to pursue us, Holy poker, they may even include *me* in the scrimmage."

A little, delicately gloved hand laid upon his arm interrupts his meditation. Miss Enid Anstruther, standing beside him, looking like a joyous fashion-plate in a light Parisian travelling dress, whispers archly: "Thinking of *me?*" then suddenly ejaculates in almost frightened tone: "Oh, I hope not! Your face is so moody, dear." Blushes spring upon the sensitive face, and his young English fiancée whispers with a piquant pout: "Gloomy, and going to marry me in three days? That's not very complimentary, Burton."

"No, in two, if we can make quick connections for London," answers Burton, rapturously. "One day is past. But I wasn't thinking of you, young

lady," he continues, tenderly, giving her delicate cheek a caressing, proprietary pinch; "I was thinking of——"

"What we left behind us," shudders his vivacious betrothed. "Don't let us think of that weird horror, when—when——" The radiance of her blue eyes and the blushes on her fair cheeks suggest the rest.

"When our wedding day is so near," whispers Burton, tenderly. "I would be very happy, too, if our Corsican friends would only forget it." He checks himself, biting his lip, and adds: "However, the modern world is before us. I can see the Pharos light-house and the Iles des Perdus."

"Why, we are nearly at Marseilles," ejaculates Enid.

"Yes, only breakfast between us and every-day France," returns her escort. "By the bye, step behind the wheel-house at the stern with me so I can give you a surreptitious kiss."

"Certainly," answers the young lady, promptly; "you are to have all the kisses you want for the glorious way you followed us to the island and brought us out of that miserable, awful and cruel affair."

"That's very nice," whispers the American in the solitude of the wheel-house. "After breakfast I shall require a few more. Now just run down and direct Tompson to get your traps together and then

tell Edwin to hurry Marina. They should be on deck. You know as soon as landed, we'll get right on to London. We can probably catch the morning train."

Miss Anstruther's answer makes Burton chew his moustache; she says: "If Marina is strong enough."

"Strong enough? She's got to be strong enough. We must get out of France. The further we are away from Corsica, the better. In France they don't need a reciprocity treaty to take us back to that mediæval island. There is no telling what devilish complexion the natives of Bocognano may put upon the two dead men we left behind us. I don't want to alarm you—I wouldn't say this to Edwin or his bride—but the sooner we are out of France, the better."

"And you think that will be the end of the matter?" asks his fiancée, clinging closely to his arm as if Mr. Barnes were potent to save her from the whole Corsican race.

"Well, I think it would have been had we got away without old Tomasso killing Count Danella and the French carbineers shooting old Tomasso. As it is"—Barnes pauses suddenly and asks abruptly: "Did poor old Tomasso Monaldi have any close relatives? Not so very close, either. Cousins, even to the second and third degree often take a hand in these barbaric feuds."

" I believe while I was there," answers Miss Anstruther, " I heard a daughter spoken of. Etheria, she was called—the betrothed, I understand, of that mediæval young cavalier who acted as bridesman and made that awful Smollet speech to Marina. Young Bernardo Saliceti, a member of the local governing body, ambitious to be elected to represent Corsica in the French Chamber of Deputies."

" Humph, a young Corsican swell betrothed to the daughter of the man killed on the mountain. Besides, I've heard the dead Musso speak of a half-brother, Corsican on the mother's side—one Corregio Cipriano Danella. De Belloc mentioned him as we rode down the mountain. Corregio lives most of the time in southern France, but has the damnable ethics of his island," mutters Burton, then he suddenly checks himself, for Edwin Anstruther is bringing his bride up the companionway to the deck.

The young English naval officer looks, notwithstanding the fatigues and excitement of his recent adventure, the embodiment of strength, happiness and courage. The only time his eyes falter is when he glances at the delicate loveliness of his bride, for Marina, notwithstanding her resistant youth, shows signs that in the last forty-eight hours she has endured more agonies than come to the average woman in a lifetime.

Yet it is evident the gracefully beautiful creature

is making a persistent effort to place the past behind her. Every time her eye lights on her bridegroom, the flush of happiness transforms the bride's face into a dream of passionate loveliness. Each time she touches the arm of Edwin Anstruther, Barnes notes that her slight fingers cling to the young Englishman's stout muscles as if to be certain a living husband is beside her and she is not bereft. Still there is a confidence in the young Corsican lady's bearing that makes the American, who now considers himself as her physician, more hopeful of her physical strength.

"Ah, Marseilles is ahead of us, dear Dr. Barnes," she says, her dark eyes lighting up in their enthusiastic southern way. "To-morrow, Paris; the next day, London, where, Edwin tells me, you hope to be happy, happy as——"

"As I am," interjects Anstruther. "Enid has promised to make you so, hasn't she, my boy? And I'll see that she does it. No delays for trousseau; minister to the mast and sentence executed at once on that young lady who is putting her head over the taffrail to hide her blushes, which she'll pretend come from the sea air."

"Please attend to Marina's blushes, Edwin; they're enough for any man to take care of," laughs Miss Anstruther.

"Yes, and take Mrs. Anstruther in to breakfast,"

commands Barnes, deftly giving Marina her English name, thinking it will impress upon her that she is no more a Corsican.

"Breakfast!" says Anstruther, promptly, and leads his bride into the dining salon.

"Though I am not married, I am hungry also," remarks Enid, suggestively.

"All right, step in quick," returns Burton, but pausing at the cabin door, he whispers: "Excuse me a moment. I see an old friend forward."

"What, you are not going to sit by my side?" pouts his fiancée.

"In a minute. Order my breakfast for me. That's something you will have to do very often in the future, dear one." Barnes emphasises his request with a pleasant squeeze of the confiding hand that is in his.

A minute later he is standing among the few third-class passengers in the extreme bow of the boat, and addressing an old Corsican, who, costumed in his best broad-brim sombrero and silver-buttoned coat, is seated upon a hen-coop and economically eating some hard-boiled eggs and roasted chestnuts he has produced from his pockets.

"You don't remember me, old Mateo," remarks Barnes, gazing at the ancient innkeeper of the auberge Il Pescatori.

"By the blessing of the Saints, I do, honoured Si-

gnore Barnes, of New York," replies the representative of old Corsica, his eyes lighting up with a lurid glow. "A grand duel that we arranged on the beach a year ago! All Ajaccio has been out to see where Antonio died and Marina took the oath of the vendetta. It helped business grandly. Has she killed yet?" The old man's tone is moodily eager.

"Not yet," answers Barnes, sententiously.

"*Per Baccho,* I saw her with another English officer in the stern a few minutes since. They say she's wedded to him. Hasn't found the man who slew her brother, but given her beauty to another of his accursed race. 'Tis shame on Corsica!" mutters the old vendettaist, disgustedly.

"I believe on the morning of that duel," interjects Burton, "you were kind enough, Mateo, to give me quite a little history of the vendetta on which you seem to be an authority; how your father, a fisherman, fell in one, and you drowned the man who killed your father."

"Ah, that memory is a pleasant one, Signore. I can always sleep in peace; my enemy had no relatives or descendants."

"But where there are relatives and descendants, the feud goes on?" The American knocks the ashes from his cigar.

"Until there are no more left, of course! *Corpo di Diavolo,* even to all who bear the name or have a

drop of the blood in their veins if they are men and Corsicans," answers old Mateo, stoutly.

"Ah, but you seem quite an authority on the subject. But are these feuds ever permitted to include women as victims?" asks the American, his eyes very anxious.

"*Maladetto*, why not? Women produce two-thirds of the vendettas," mutters the old man, sardonically. "But latterly, in these degenerate days, they omit all but wives; wives often share the fate of their husbands. There was Teresa, the spouse of Bonaldo, her throat was cut; and the young and beautiful Dona Issea, who was foolish enough to marry Don Gonsalo of Serra and bring herself into her husband's feud. Her fate was very terrible; she and her unborn child——"

But Mr. Barnes turns moodily away from this cruel aspect of the infernal passion of unending revenge. As he enters the dining salon and seats himself beside the ethereal Miss Enid, he mutters to himself: "By Jove, am I losing my nerve?" for the thought that his delicate fiancée may possibly be drawn into the horrible blood feud has produced a new sensation in his veins.

Half an hour afterward the Ajaccio boat is pulled up alongside of the Quai Joliette in Marseilles and is discharging its few passengers and little freight into that bustling artery of modern commerce full

of moving wagons, shrieking cabmen and the other etceteras of a great commercial port.

A big steamer of the Algerian line is ahead of them and a troop ship taking soldiers on board for far-away Tonkin is astern of them. The horrible scenes on the mediæval island he had left but yesterday seem like a nightmare to the American.

The ladies are below getting their little baggage together, assisted by Edwin. Barnes, who has already sent a waiter on shore to bring up a carriage, with an after-breakfast cigar between his teeth, is pacing the deck of the vessel.

A bright, smart little telegraph boy flies up the gangplank. After asking directions of the first officer, he steps to Mr. Barnes and hands him a blue envelope.

"A wire from somebody who knew I was on this boat," thinks the American, and hastily tearing it open, reads:

"Burton H. Barnes,

"Steamer Constantine arriving Marseilles. Ajaccio, May 26, 1883.

"*En evant* double quick! The devil is behind you. Look out for Saliceti. Details by letter.

"De B."

From instinct Mr. Barnes touches his hip pocket just to be sure his revolver is there. Then he paces the deck meditatively for a moment, cogitating: "Something must be happening in Corsica for that

old Algerine campaigner De Belloc to send such a dispatch. Best the ladies don't see this," and tears the message up, tossing the pieces overboard.

As he does so Miss Anstruther is beside him, a fluffy white parasol over her head. "Blue pieces of paper," she says lightly. "A telegram, Burton. You have secured our places on the Paris train. You think of everything."

"Yes," lies her fiancé. After a moment he remarks: "By the bye, Enid, this young Saliceti you spoke of, did he mention England in his Smollet speech?"

"Why, now you ask me, I think he did. Danella refused to translate, explaining that it was a Smollet-Fielding bridal speech. You know the kind that—that——" The young English girl's face flushes very red, "but I think I caught the word England."

"This Bernardo is not a poor peasant, I presume."

"Oh, quite rich for a local Corsican proprietor, I believe. Why do you ask?"

"Oh, well, it takes capital to indulge in a long-distance vendetta," observes Barnes, gloomily.

"You think this young man——" Enid's face has grown almost frightened.

"I don't think anything about it at present. I only think we'll get on to London as soon as possible. We have but twenty minutes to catch the train.

Ah, here's Tompson with the valises!" He takes Miss Anstruther's maid, an English girl of about twenty, and rather helpless in a French-speaking country, puts her with the heavier articles of their baggage into a voiture and dispatches her to the railroad depot at once. Returning to his fiancée on the deck of the boat, he says impatiently: "Why doesn't Edwin bring Marina on deck?"

This is answered by the young Corsican bride herself. "My husband," she lingers on the word radiantly, "will be along in a minute. He is cording up our baggage, sailor fashion. 'All atauto,' I think Edwin calls it. Is it all ashore now, dear Mr. Barnes," and Marina drapes her light travelling robe with graceful hand about her pretty feet.

"Yes, as quickly as possible. Come, Enid!" and the American leads the way.

Never has Marina looked more radiantly beautiful than she does as Barnes assists the ladies down the gangplank. A simple yet effective travelling frock drapes the lines of her exquisite figure. Her face beams full of a great hope on the Quai Joliette. The bustling traffic of the great seaport of southern France represents the modern world, into which she is again stepping. It seems to separate the bride from the mediæval barbarism and cruel vengeance of her native island—passions that had so often dominated her during the last dread year.

To Barnes she whispers: "I only look forward now. The past is forgotten; happiness is before me!" and waves a delicately gloved hand to her husband, who springs down the gangplank carrying the corded articles. To him she cries: "Hurry, Edwin! Twenty minutes to catch the Paris train."

"Then I've got you in time!" shouts a voice from the quay that makes Barnes start and turn about.

Before them stands Miss Maud Chartris, her high, bronzed boots more bronzy than ever, the cardinal red of her long, silk stockings that outline her legs from knees to ankles even more aggressively gleaming. A pert little sunshade is over her straw-hatted head, which is adorned by two long, blonde pigtails tied with blue ribbons which she flops about defiantly. The rest of her between knees and neck is a white muslin frock and pink sash.

"Ma said I was to catch you, Edwin, at the boat if you came on it. She wants you at her hotel, the Grand, Rue Noailles. You're to look after that plumbing job in her house in London. The master plumber is robbing her."

"Awfully sorry I cannot accommodate your mother, Maud," remarks Anstruther. The carriage engaged by Barnes is standing ready for them. "We steer straight to the depot. I thought your mother was in London already."

"No, we're going back to Nice. Von Bülow is

there. Between us all, ma means to marry him. How I pity the German. I'll ride up with you and tell you all about it. Hurry, there's my new nursery governess trying to get across the quay to catch me. Gee, that hackman nearly ran her down—my, that would have been fine—no lessons!" cries the Chartris girl, whose widowed mother sternly represses the unfortunate Maud from growing into young ladyhood and absolutely denies her birthdays till she, Lady Chartris, has captured another husband.

Already Enid and Marina are on the back seat, Anstruther steps in; Barnes likewise.

"Room for one more!" cries Maud, who springs in and kisses both of the young ladies effusively.

"Now," she says, naïvely, "I'll sit on Edwin's lap. He's my cousin, Mr. Barnes, and I'm a child—so it won't make Marina jealous. Now I'm comfortable!" then babbles: "How did the Corsican wedding go off? Looks as if it was a success by the bride's face. The only one who's glum here is 'Burton darling.' Enid's a little offish, is she? Not that old La Belle-Blackwood-borrow-it-from-Barnes affair?"

Miss Anstruther's eyes began to gleam at the mention of the only serious fault she ever has had against her fiancée.

"That's a mistake!" rattles on the semi-innocent

Maud; "Ma says when you get a man, nail him and reform him. Wait till I get into long dresses, see me nail 'em and reform 'em, eh, 'Burton, *darling?*'"

"I thought your mother was going to put you at a strict school in London?" says Barnes, savagely.

"Well, she was, but Von Bülow is in Nice and ma's made up her mind it's her last chance and is going there. Gee, if ma doesn't get married soon I'll be in socks again and dresses up to my waist."

"No birthdays in hailing distance, yet?" laughs Anstruther.

"Does this look like it?" Miss Chartris makes an abortive attempt to lengthen her short skirts. "Bet ma keeps me eleven till she gets that German."

Already the carriage having rolled up the Boulevard des Dames and passed the Arc de Triomphe has turned into the Rue Bernard du Bois, making for the big railway station, out of which nearly all trains leave Marseilles not only for Paris, but everywhere else.

"All right, you give my compliments to your mother, Maud," remarks the sailor, trying to cut off Maud's effusions. "Tell her to write me at my London address and I'll hoist her plumber at the yard-arm."

By this time they are at the great station. Miss Chartris skips out and the rest follow her from the

carriage. Trains are ready to leave for the four quarters of the globe; the platforms are filled with hurrying passengers. Some gaily dressed ladies are being hurried to the *rapide* that has just rushed in from Paris and is about to depart for the Riviera, though the season is nearly ended. A couple of little Scotch boys in kilts and glengarries are being dragged by their nurse toward this. One of them makes Maud very angry by crying: "Let me play wi' tha braw lassie wi' thae red legs."

It is hard to believe a mediæval vendetta can be inserted on such a scene. Barnes, glancing at his watch, finds they have ten minutes before the train departs: he says cheerfully but hurriedly: "Look out for the ladies, Edwin; I'll find Tompson and the rest of the baggage," and goes off to get the tickets and make the necessary arrangements.

But "look out for the ladies," is more easily said than done.

The crowd is quite large, the station great in extent. Trains are departing for everywhere.

Three jabbering porters have seized their hand baggage and are carrying it in sections towards different trains that will scatter the pieces to the West and the Pyrennes, to the East and Italy.

Edwin pursues these; then Enid gives a gasp. Another porter, calling: "Arles, Tarascon and Avignon!" has pounced upon her special handbag

and is rushing away with it. Miss Anstruther flies after him, leaving Maud and Marina together.

Five minutes later, Barnes returns to find Edwin supporting Marina, whose face is very pale, and whose eyes are scarcely conscious. Were it not for the stout arm about her, she would fall to the platform of the great station, under the feet of the hurrying throng.

Miss Chartris is gazing meditatively at her, chewing the blue-enameled knob of her parasol and furtively tucking something in her glove.

"What the deuce has happened to her?" asks the American.

"She is too ill to speak," answers the young husband, astounded. "What am I to do? We cannot take her on the train in this shape. She is absolutely unfit to travel. She has nearly fainted again." For Marina's eyes, seeing Edwin, close again in apparent despair.

"What produced it?" demanded Barnes. "She was the picture of health when I left her."

Here Enid runs up with her replevined handsatchel.

"Do you know how this occurred?" asks Edwin, eagerly.

"Not so much as you do!" replies Miss Anstruther; "Maud, how did this happen?" She turns suspicious eyes upon Miss Chartris, who cries

nervously: "What are you jumping on me for? I was only keeping Marina's handbag and umbrella, and Edwin's canes and rug, and I looked round and she'd got it in the neck!"

"Not a dagger?" shudders Enid. But a hasty inspection of Marina's white throat relieving her, Miss Anstruther cries: "Maud, how dare you use such ambiguous Americanisms! What has she got?"

"How do I know?" pouts Maud, aggressively. "She was too groggy to speak. If it hadn't been for Edwin grabbing her, she'd have conflumaxed upon the floor. Perhaps her stays are too tight, like yours."

Barnes's fiancée doesn't reply to this atrocious slander upon her exquisite waist, but plies smelling salts at the nostrils of the bride whom Edwin is supporting.

"It can't be paralysis!" shudders the groom, trying in vain to revive Marina.

"Not a bit," answers Barnes, after hasty examination.

"Do you think we dare put her on the train?" queries Edwin, anxiously.

"As a friend, I would say we must get her away, but——" The American pauses.

"Mercy! You have some news from Ajaccio?" Enid breaks in, trembling.

"No more news, only it is wise to be moving on. But," Burton feels the fluttering pulse of the bride, "but as a doctor, my opinion is she must remain here for a few hours at least. I'll get a carriage. Here, Tompson," he says to the maid who had followed him from the crowd in the depot, "help your mistress with the grips!"

The two gentlemen support Marina outside the station, and Maud following, says: "Take her to the Grand, our hotel. Ma's got lovely rooms there."

"Yes, it's only a short distance," remarks Barnes, "and we can make your wife comfortable at once."

The whole party soon reach the Grand Hotel on the Rue Noailles. Here they are received with mixed exclamations of surprise and delight and then concern by Lady Chartris. "Marina was well, you say, only a few minutes ago and fainted at the railroad station. What produced it?" cries the English matron, after the young Corsican lady has been taken to a bedroom and a well-recommended physician sent for, Enid staying by the patient until his arrival.

Mr. Barnes doesn't deem it wise to go into details with Lady Chartris.

"You had better descend and make yourself comfortable in the café, Edwin," he suggests. "Young husbands are too nervous when their wives are sick."

Taking Anstruther down with him he whispers:

"Besides, did you notice whenever she looked at you she swooned again. Best keep away until you learn the true reason of this sudden attack."

"Do you think it is heart disease?" asks Edwin, distractedly.

"Not the kind you mean. I can tell you that your bride is as normally healthy as any woman in the world," answers the American. "It was some shock to the brain or nervous system, I think. The question is, what was it?"

"Can it have been anything connected with that horrible island?" queries Edwin, anxiously.

"That I'm now about to attempt to discover," observes Burton.

Meditating as to what the blow is, Barnes leaves the young English officer and comes upstairs, to interview the only witness he thinks available—the adolescent Maud. As he reaches Lady Chartris's parlour, that lady's door is slightly open, and words issue to him that make him pause outside the entrance.

"Now, Maud," says Lady Chartris, sternly, "what caused Mrs. Anstruther to faint? You were alone with her."

"Ma, I didn't do it! Sure, I didn't!" falters the girl.

"The truth, or I shall take you to my bedroom. You know what will happen to you there, if you

don't tell me everything." The voice of the mother suggests awful possibilities.

"Yes, ma, I will; I'll tell you every blessed thing —don't look at me that way. Why, I was just walking round with Marina and I left her for a minute and a gentleman, French and Italian mixed, said: 'You are with Madame Anstruther?' He stumbled over the name, and I answered proudly— Marina looked awfully fetching—'You bet, she's my cousin by marriage.' Then he said: 'Give her this, with my regards,' and handed me a note. Well, I gave it to Marina and that finished her."

"*Finished* her?"

"Yes, she kind of read it in two pieces. First she drew up and looked like—like you when you think you've caught me in something awful—strong, savage and horrible. And when she read the second part, then she looked like I look when I'm going to catch it."

"And then?" Lady Chartris's voice is intense with excited curiosity.

"Well, then Edwin came up and caught her just as she was going to fall on the floor of the railroad station, and they brought her here."

"Is that everything?"

"You bet! Ain't it enough? How should I know anything more?"

"Oh!" exclaims Lady Chartris, in extreme disappointment. A moment after she adds, suavely: "You will have no lessons to-day, Maud."

"Bully!" ejaculates her offspring in wild delight; but sets up a stifled howl as her mother continues: "You can spend the day in bed."

"For what? Handing Marina a paper that anybody would give her?"

"For running away from your new governess on the Quai Joliette. Miss Marston reported it. To bed at once!"

The face of the eavesdropping Barnes becomes gloomy. Here is a witness whose evidence he wants and isn't going to get. He promptly enters Lady Chartris's parlour and says: "Hi, Maudie, run downstairs and I'll follow you and we'll buy some *marrons glacés* together."

Maud is half-way down the first flight before the last of Barnes's sentence is out of his mouth.

"How dare you send my child away when I had ordered her to bed?" remarks her mother, angrily.

"Bed? Oh, Maud is too young to be sent to bed."

"You think she is *too* young?" Lady Chartris's tone is appeased.

"Why, certainly, Von Bülow said the same. A child of her tender age—is it nine or ten?—might imagine ghosts and goblins!"

"So Von Bülow said that! Yes, Maud is very young, but don't give her too many bonbons," remarks the widow, her face modified, as Barnes steps down the stairs.

Two minutes after, Miss Chartris, eating bonbons in the seclusion of a magnificent confectioner's shop on the Cours Belzunce, remarks, suspiciously: "What are you doing all this for, Mr. Barnes of New York?"

"I've got a little information to get from you, Maud," says the American. "What kind of a looking man was he who gave you the communication for Mrs. Anstruther?"

"Oh, well, he——" Suddenly the girl's blue eyes grow big with astonishment, she gulps, a marron going down her throat whole: "How did you guess? Oh, you know everything, you do, Mr. Barnes of New York. But I'll tell you a little, you've been so nice about the *glacés*. He was an Italian or foreigner or something of that kind with the manners of a waiter or a gentleman. He had a long, thin scar over his left eye-brow. I noticed that because his sleeve buttons had the same crest as Musso Danella's—by the bye, how's dear Musso?"

"The deuce! Do you think Marina knew him?" The American's voice is hoarse with concern.

"How can I tell? Bridie didn't see him. I sim-

ply gave her the note. It knocked her stupid, and she almost fainted."

Then Maud's eyes opened bigger than ever, for Mr. Barnes says sternly: "Give me that note!"

"What makes you think I've got it?" Maud mutters, affrighted.

"Give me the note you picked up from the floor of the depot when it fell from Marina's fainting hand, and tucked in that left glove of yours."

"Not unless you buy 'em for two boxes of *marrons glacés!*" asserts the infant, commercially.

"Done!" says the American, sharply.

Miss Chartris unbuttons her left glove and carefully extracts from it and passes him *three pieces of paper.*

"Now pay up!" she exclaims.

But after matching the three fragments of a letter and glancing hastily over them the face of the gentleman in front of her has grown so distressed and horrified that the candy she is eating slips from Maud's fingers and falls upon the floor of the shop.

CHAPTER II

THE DOCUMENT IN BARNES'S POCKETBOOK

"You have read this?" Barnes is speaking while he is deciphering as well as he can the mutilated note.

"How could I—in the carriage with you and after that under Mama's awful eyes?"

"Where's the fourth—the other piece?" asked Burton, savagely.

"I—I couldn't get the other—the people were stamping about so," stammers Maud. "She was tearing it up when she keeled over."

"Did Marina say anything?"

"Yes, she sorter gasped: 'Don't tell him!' Then Edwin grabbed her. But what's in it?" asks Maud, as Barnes strives again to gain the full meaning of the three-quarter epistle.

"Nothing that would interest a little girl."

"But it would interest ma. Let me tell ma. Then she'll let up on me."

"Not a word to anyone!" says Burton, sternly.

"Two more boxes of *marrons glacés*."

"Here, buy them!" The American passed to

Maud's eagerly outstretched hand a couple of twenty-franc gold pieces. "But——" Barnes's demeanour has become terrifying, "if you blab of this to Edwin Anstruther, I'll tell your mother that you kept this note from her."

"Great Jones!" mutters Maud, shivering. Then she implores: "But if I keep dark, you'll beg me off for running away with you?"

"Yes, avoid your mother's eyes for two hours and I'll probably put something in Lady Chartris's head that will make her so happy she'll think you the nicest little chick out of its shell!"

The American courteously leads the Chartris infant to her hotel, but even as he bids the child adieu at the door, the clerk coming out, says: "Monsieur Barnes, a note for you at the office."

Burton has been compelled to register himself and party. He steps in, and tearing open an envelope addressed in an unknown hand, reads what, stable-minded as he is, gives him a shock. Though for a second his blood runs rapidly in his veins, he checks it and becomes full of that icy, deadly, calm rage which comes to men of the Anglo-Saxon race when their women are assailed.

"This compels me to tell Edwin. I must post him a little bit," he thinks rapidly, and acting with equal promptness, steps into the café. Not finding Anstruther there, Barnes walks up the stairs.

At the door of his wife's chamber, the English naval officer is pacing the corridor.

"Marina is much better. She has recovered her senses," says Edwin, elatedly. "But Enid believes it best for me not to see her immediately, and the French physician declares it is madness at present to think of the fatigue of a long railway journey for my wife." The young husband lingers lovingly on the term.

"I had feared that," remarks Barnes. "The important thing is now to guard her."

"*Guard* her?"

"Yes. It is now imperative that I tell you, Anstruther, something I would have kept from you."

Two minutes' hurried conversation and the English sailor says in quarter-deck directness: "I understand. No one goes into that door except the doctor and Enid. If anyone prowls around here—lend me your revolver, Barnes. You always carry one."

"Yes, and you must from now on do the same," answers the American as he passes the weapon to the Englishman. He steps to his own room, and gets another pistol from his valise. Testing it carefully as regards cylinder and lock, the celebrated pistol-shot mutters grimly: "If I have to shoot, it will be to kill. Now, this makes it necessary to see Elijah Emory at once. Lucky I cabled him."

Making his way hurriedly to the busy Cours

Belzunce, Barnes steps into the Hotel des Deux-Mondes, a well-known house of commercial entertainment. A moment's inquiry of the polite clerk and he steps into the correspondence room of the hotel. After looking about a moment, he places his hand on the shoulder of a man engaged in writing.

"I saw you come in the door, Barnes!" says the man, continuing his labour. "Glad to behold you. Your wire from Ajaccio came last night. I've got all the information for you. I missed you at the gare, and reckoned you'd gone on to Paris. Here's what you wanted, finished." He passes him the paper.

"Thank you!" Barnes looks it over carefully. "By your report here, you seem to know everything about this country."

"Well, everything a foreigner can. I've represented the Pinkertons in Southern France nigh on to eight years."

"Yes, you did some very nice work last season for my sister, Lady Morington, about those stolen jewels at Nice. That reminded me of you. But I've got something for you to recapture more important than stolen jewels."

"What's that?" sharply asks the American detective, who has become a European one.

"Stolen happiness."

"Holy Moses, if I could gather all that up and

restore it to people, I could retire from biz," laughs Mr. Elijah Reuben Emory, who is a man of about thirty-eight years, of piercing grey eyes, and off-hand, slap-dash manner which was once extremely American, but has gradually been changed by a Continental life to a bad imitation of that of a denizen of Southern Europe.

Barnes glances carefully about the room—which is deserted—the day having, as is quite usual at this season in Marseilles, grown intensely hot and uncomfortable.

"There's no living thing here except flies," remarks Emory. "I took care of that before I began to write my confidential report for you. I'll keep my eye on the door, so you can spurt it out freely."

"Have you ever been over in Corsica?" whispers his client.

"Never!" says the detective. "And I don't hanker after going there. If a Corsican commits a crime and gets to his blessed island, he can stay there —for me. To arrest him the gendarmes might have to kill his whole tribe; they hang together like a flock of wild hogs."

"Yes, too much. Now I'll tell you what I want you to do for me, Emory. I want you to act as a buffer."

"A buffer agin what?"

"Against the intangible. I haven't settled exactly

against whom, but listen to my story. It won't take over half an hour. Then you'll know how to act."

Rapidly, but under his breath, Barnes tells the American detective of the extraordinary, uncalled for and mistaken Corsican blood feud that he fears instead of having been satisfied two nights before by the death of two men, has been increased and extended.

During the first of his story, Emory beams upon him with the genial smile of a man expecting ducats. During the latter part of it, his face grows worried, several times he nervously wipes the perspiration from his brow, and squirms all over his seat uneasily. At the close he shudders: "Gee whiz, you want me to put my finger in a regular Corsican vendetta? Not on yer blooming life! Not for all the rhino in Baring Brothers'. I tackled a West Virginia feud once and, by the mercy of God, came out alive; but from this dark age Corsican article, which goes into fourth and fifth cousins—excuse *me!* I've heard of a fellow who barricaded himself in a house for twenty years, and when he thought every blarsted being but himself in the vendetta was coffined, came out to take a sun-bath, and—died in ten seconds. A foster-cousin, or something of that kind he had clean forgotten, was laying for him. Besides, women sometimes take a hand in these affairs and play the very devil."

"Yes, it's because one unfortunate lady is already in this affair and another may be drawn into it I speak to you," implores Barnes. "I know money won't tempt you, Emory, but a countrywoman, or rather one who will be a countrywoman——"

"Oh, you mean the future Mrs. Barnes of New York. Well, for her sake, hang me if I don't go you!" The Yankee detective extends his hand. "But it ain't the money, though, of course, that'll be liberal."

"Thank you!" Barnes gives Emory a grateful grip, adding, earnestly: "Now, let's look over this affair."

But the detective interrupts: "Why don't you get a move on and fly from the snaky, cussed thing? As soon as ye're married, take yer wife under yer arm and slope to America. Anstruther can sneak his bride to England, and——"

"That won't end it," answers Burton. "There's money enough in the pockets of one or two of these people to carry the feud to the ends of the earth. A few moments ago I told you about Edwin's bride following the man she thought had killed her brother to Egypt. Now, when I walk down Broadway on a pleasant evening from the theatre, I'm not going to be looking over my shoulder for a dagger in my back. I don't think Anstruther would be content to live with sudden death hanging over him and his

wife among the green lanes of England. There's only one way to settle this affair."

"How's that?"

"Squelch it!" says Barnes, savagely, "by killing those who would murder me and my kin."

"Gee whiz, the French Government?"

"The French Government won't prevent my defending myself. In Corsica itself France has practically never interfered in vendettas. Even bandits in general have been too much for the local gendarmes—there are two or three wandering around Monte del Oro, near Bocognano, now. Here are the documents and now we'll meet this matter personally and practically. As I wired, you have obtained as far as you can, a list of all the relatives of Musso Danella." Barnes looks over the paper Emory has given him and observes: "All, except Corregio Cipriano Danella, Musso's half brother, are practically French."

"Yes, that I reckon puts them out of this biz," says Emory. "Except there's a cousin—a kind of knock-about fellow, Enrico, who's Corsican also—I didn't get him till the last. You'll find his name at the bottom of the page."

"Where is he?" asks Barnes.

"Oh, Enrico's bumming about the Riviera some place, I reckon. They say he's always near a gaming table when he's got any money in his pocket.

When he hasn't, Enrico don't care what he does to get more," answers the detective.

"But, from your report, Corregio, the brother, is now in Marseilles. We'll take this Corregio first. He has a country estate near Serra in the island and spends the balance of his time chiefly in Southern France; is intensely Corsican," returns Barnes. Taking from his pocketbook the fragments of the note Maud had given him—the one that had produced Marina's nervous stroke—he places them before the detective, and asks: "Is this Corregio Danella's handwriting?"

"I can't tell, but I'll find out for you," answers Elijah, then his eyes begin to roll, as he mutters: "Whew! judging from the part of it I can read, that's a nasty document."

"Yes, though I don't think we've got the worst of it, it is as crafty as it is cruel. It was given to the bride not entirely recovered from the agitation of that horrible wedding night to so shock her delicate and already over-taxed nerves that we cannot move away from here. Some devil in Marseilles is trying to hold us here till these bloodhounds arrive from Corsica and have time to act. Here's another note in the same handwriting that puts me in," remarks Burton, moodily. "I received it at my hotel half an hour ago. It's the Corsican custom to give a delicate hint to the doomed." He reads:

"'Have a care of yourself! This is thy warning. Remember death is on you and your spouse and your offspring, born and unborn.'"

"Pleasant reading for a man with his wedding day just ahead of him," snarls the New Yorker. "That's what makes me as vindictive as they are."

"Do you think with this in your hand." whispers Emory, impressively, "you should have a wedding day. I've heard such monstrous reports of their infernal jambories of blood from Perrier, the French detective, who went over there once——"

"Not until this is finished," interjects Burton, with a moan of disappointment.

The detective's comment makes even Barnes's regular pulse beat slower.

"Well, what are your plans to meet this?" asks the American criminologist.

"My plans are very simple," says Barnes, tersely. "I'm going to get our women in a safe place and then—THEN THE HUNTED BECOMES THE HUNTER!"

"Great tarantulas!" mutters Elijah, admiringly. "But how are ye to get the women safe? Someone may be potting 'em while you're rounding up the others! How are ye going to fix that?"

The American's plan, as he whispers it to Emory, is so adroit, that the detective emits a triumphant whistle and says: "Gee whiz, just the idea!"

"Everything must be ready for to-night," directs Barnes. "No other Corsican steamer than the one on which we arrived will come to-day. By to-morrow I hope to have the ladies reasonably beyond pursuit."

"All right. I think I can fix it for you."

"Meantime," says Barnes, "see if you can find what cables bearing on this matter have been received from Ajaccio and to whom addressed. For the note to Marina and my devilish warning show that someone has heard of the bridal night tragedy from Corsica."

"That will be difficult!"

"Not if you give the telegraph clerks enough money."

"Yes, most anything can be done the way you spend money, Mr. Barnes." This last issues from Emory's smiling lips as the American is writing a check. "I'll report progress to you not later than 1 P. M.; that'll give you time for your arrangements."

Coming from this to the Grand Hotel, Barnes shortly strolls into Lady Chartris's parlour and has an interview with that matron which places her in the Seventh Heaven of delight.

"You think of going to Nice?" he suggests; he would have proposed some little Italian watering place, but knows that the widow will only consider

the spot where Van Bülow, the young German diplomatist, is located.

"Yes, I've concluded to remain there a few weeks until the season absolutely ends," responds Lady Chartris, "only the good hotels are so cruelly expensive."

"Well, there are some lovely and retired villas on the little Bay of Villefranche, a twenty minutes' carriage drive from the Promenade des Anglais. Supposing you engage one?"

"Do you think I'm a Crœsus!" screams the widow in horror. "Do you want to ruin me? Do you suppose I have your pocketbook, Mr. Barnes of New York?"

"That's exactly what I want you to suppose, my dear Lady Chartris. I'll pay for the villa; you occupy it. In about a week from now, Mrs. Anstruther and probably Enid will be your guests; perhaps Edwin and I also for a little while. But you are to say nothing about that. You'll keep Tompson, Enid's maid, and take her on with you. The villa is to be rented by you and entirely in your name."

"And you pay the running expenses?"

"With pleasure."

"Oh, Mr. Barnes, how magnificently generous."

"Don't leave here earlier than the day after to-

morrow. In fact, that is the day you must leave, but make your arrangements quickly after you reach Nice. You'll have no trouble in finding an unoccupied villa at Villefranche; it's so near the end of the season. Be sure its grounds run to the water and have a landing place."

"Why, certainly, it will suit me exactly. You say Von Bülow is at the Hotel des Anglais?" Excited rapture is in Lady Chartris's voice.

"Yes, from the German attaché's conversation with me in Monte Carlo, I imagine that he expected you would be there."

"Oh, what an insinuation, dear Mr. Barnes." The widow's face is flushed, her eyes modestly drooping. Then she suddenly exclaims: "Ah, you are delayed in getting to London. You expect to marry dear Enid from the villa. Maud could be the maid of honour, couldn't she?"

Barnes starts horrified at the suggestion. "You will say nothing of our going to Nice to anyone—especially your child," he remarks, commandingly, tempering his words, however, by adding: "Maud is too young to keep a secret."

"Yes, childish tongues will babble," smiles the widow as Burton goes moodily away.

Mr. Barnes's features are still very solemn, as early in the afternoon, after another interview with Emory, he says to Enid, who is in consultation with

him: "You think Marina is well enough to be conveyed in a carriage a mile or two?"

"Why, certainly, she is out of bed now. Don't fear for her courage as regards herself, Burton. It is my brother the dear girl is alarmed for."

"I knew that; I've seen her indomitable spirit too often," returns Barnes, "so please get Edwin here and I'll arrange what we're all to do, and then we'll set about doing it."

"Edwin never leaves the door of her chamber now," whispers Enid.

"Quite right, but we can from here keep our eyes on the passage, and I've got to talk to you both."

In about thirty seconds, the American is saying words to both his fiancée and her brother that make the girl's face extremely agitated, and Edwin's look like the day he gained the Victoria cross.

"This morning," remarks the American, under his breath, "I had hoped, with Edwin's aid, to get you, Enid and Marina to England, where three or four London bulldog detectives and the fear of the British hangman would have probably kept Mrs. Anstruther safely from murderous pursuit until I had settled the affair. But now this devilish letter has given her such a shock that we dare not immediately subject her to the fatigue of the long railway journey to London."

As he shows it to them and they try to decipher it, Barnes hastily explains how he had purchased the mutilated letter from Maud Chartris with *marrons glacés.*

"And that awful child concealed it from us!" cries Enid. "Her mother should be told immediately."

"What, and have Lady Chartris rush tremblingly back to London when, without danger to herself, she can do us a grand turn in Nice."

"In Nice? How?" Enid asks, astonished.

"Tell you in a minute," replies her fiancé; for Edwin, after puzzling over the torn letter, suddenly mutters: "I—I can't exactly understand this, Barnes."

"Neither do I. The fourth quarter probably contains the infernal portion that caused your bride's alarm for you, for her fears I know are not so much for herself, as for you. As it is, here's enough for us to be sure that it was given to Marina in the hope that after the ineffable despair and cruel mental torture of her bridal night, it would so smite her high-strung nerves that they would break down sufficiently to detain us here so a few Corsican thugs could come over and—cut our throats. That's about the plain English of it. Now I, with your assistance, Edwin, am going first, to make Enid and Marina safe."

"How?" demands the English girl, whose face has grown pallid, though two hectic spots blaze upon her delicate cheeks and her blue eyes scintillate with the quiet courage of the blood that had come down to her from Hastings and Crécy and Agincourt.

"By Lady Chartris. She's going to take a secluded, water-washed villa at Villefranche in her own name. House rentals have to be reported to the municipal officials. With the name of Lady Chartris attached to it, no one will guess that we will occupy it!"

"But Prunella Chartris would fly from a vendetta as she would from the small-pox," says Edwin.

"Quicker!" cries Enid.

"Quite right, but Prunella Chartris shan't hear of a vendetta. We'll turn up at Villefranche, Edwin, in about four days, leave the ladies there, amply guarded, and then you and I, my jolly seadog, will turn our attention to our Corsican friends. We will be footloose, and can do the hunting and killing, if necessary, and settle the affair in some way definitely and forever." Barnes's manner is lighter than his heart.

"You'll find me with you," answers the English Lieutenant, his eyes blazing as if he were on the bridge of his ship in action. "This is the second time, because she loved me, that my bride has been driven to despair. But—" here his tone becomes

very anxious—" how do you think we can make our dear ones safe? How do you expect to get Enid and Marina from Marseilles unnoticed by the people that are already hunting us, to the villa near Nice? "

" What do wild animals do when they are hunted? Take to the water! " remarks Burton. " That leaves no trail. Do you think, Anstruther, that you can navigate a yacht? "

" Do you think that you can shoot a pistol straight? " growls the British naval officer.

" Very well. A yacht will be waiting for us, engaged by Emory. It wasn't difficult at this season of the year; a good many are going out of commission in these waters. There will be nothing but English seamen on board, not over many of them. She is a schooner, I believe; reasonably well found, reasonably fast, and with cabin accommodations for our limited party. We'll put the girls on board tonight. We're both armed and our party will not be noticed driving on the Prado, where everybody drives. In a little bay, as I have arranged it, off the Corniche Road, near the Bains du Roucas Blanc, a boat will be waiting. There we'll put the ladies on board and sail away. Then who'll be able to tell where we go to? "

" With a quadrant and compass on board, why shouldn't I take you through the Bay of Biscay to London? " replies Anstruther.

"As a physician, I doubt if Marina could stand the tossing she might get in the Bay of Biscay and the Atlantic. At this season the waters are generally quiet here," remarks Barnes.

"You think my bride is as ill as all that?" Edwin clasps his hands together with a gesture of affright.

"I think as a physician without practice," remarks Barnes, in professional tone, "that the French doctor is perfectly right when he says if your wife would avoid brain fever she requires absolute rest and mighty good nursing for the next few days. That's the reason I didn't suggest sending Enid on to London by the morning train, properly attended and guarded, of course."

"It's just as well you didn't make that suggestion," replies Miss Anstruther, decidedly. "I shouldn't have gone."

"Yes, I—I know you always like to be at the front of the scrimmage, Enid," remarks Barnes. "So just keep an eye out, Edwin, that no one intrudes upon your wife, and I'll finish up all the arrangements about the yacht with Emory."

Edwin rises, but at the door, which had been left open so that the gentlemen could keep their eye on the passage to Marina's room, he turns, and noting Barnes's longing eyes directed toward his sister, says with sailor bluntness: "Old man, you seem to think

of everybody but yourself in this matter. Are you aware that this projected cruise won't permit you and Enid to be spliced in London in three days from now?"

"I had not forgotten that," replies Burton. "How could I?" His eyes still on his beautiful fiancée, who, notwithstanding her anxiety and trouble, looks lovely as a goddess and tempting as a nymph.

"Well," says the sailor, "we jack-tars have a custom of getting married before we start on a cruise. There are ministers in Marseilles as well as London." Then Edwin Anstruther walks off, closing the door behind him and leaving Mr. Barnes confronted with a young lady whose lilies have changed to roses and—the greatest temptation of his life.

The poor fellow thinks of the damnable document he has in his pocket, proclaiming death to the unfortunate woman who marries him; he remembers Mateo's horrible statements as to the fate of females marrying into a blood feud and forces the desire from his eyes.

His embarrassment is increased by the superb manner of his fiancée. Without a word she walks up to Barnes and unaffectedly tenders him her lips.

"Don't think me forward," she whispers sweetly, "but if you think you can take better care of me as

your wife—if you feel very much disappointed at the —the delay." Her words are faltered out bashfully yet succinctly. Only once he catches her eyes, they are melting with trust and devotion, as they seek the floor.

She is in his arms.

The accursed warning—threatening death to her he marries—rustles in his pocketbook as he crushes her to his breast. It stays the mad rush of his passion. He forces himself to calmness and whispers, his face pale, his lips contorted: "For God's sake, don't misunderstand me. I love you more dearly than ever, but until this affair is settled, it would be an infamy if I married you."

"Good Heavens! You fear they are going to kill you?"

"No, if there is any killing to be done, I propose to do it." For an instant he is about to show her the infernal document. His hand is already on his breast pocket, when it stops, palsied. Barnes remembers the impulsive courage of his betrothed. "My Lord, if she saw this," he thinks, "Enid would insist on marrying me offhand. She'd think it her duty to stand as my wife in the front of the skirmish and defy them." He says slowly, almost brokenly: "You must trust me in this matter, dear one. Only never doubt my love."

"Oh, that would be too horrible," she falters,

"Burton, that would break my heart. You know more about the affair than I. You are the best judge." Her lips are tendered to him again, but Barnes notes, with a sigh, their salute is colder, and that tears are very near the divine eyes of Enid Anstruther.

Away from him, she wrings her white hands, and in the solitude of her chamber, wails: "Oh, everything seems to be changed since yesterday." Then the natural pride of the maiden coming to her, she says haughtily to herself: "The next proposition as to the naming of the wedding day shall come from you, Mr. Barnes of New York, and perhaps—Oh, my Heaven!"

This last distracting mental outcry is produced by the Chartris infant banging in upon her and ejaculating: "Holy Jones, you look more offish, Enid, than you did that La Belle Blackwood night at Monte Carlo." To this Maud adds, merrily: "Say, ma and I are going to Nice. I've read in the papers that Blacky's there at the Hotel de St. Petersburg."

CHAPTER III

PLAYING THE ENEMIES' GAME

Mr. Barnes attempts to forget his postponed nuptials in arranging the details of his darling's safety. Emory shortly brings to him an old cancelled check upon a branch of the Credit Lyonnais bearing the signature of Corregio Cipriano Danella, but comparing it with Marina's mutilated note and also the warning sent to him, the American cannot be certain of the handrwriting.

"Perhaps it has been disguised in both the epistles," suggests the detective, and continues his report. "As far as I can find from a clerk in the telegraph office, Rue de la Republic, that I have sometimes hired before in such matters, there was a long cable came from Bernardo Saliceti at Ajaccio to Corregio Danella late yesterday evening. It stated that you and your party were to arrive on the *Constantine;* that you by your arts had murdered his brother, and that Madame Anstruther, for the defence of her husband against the just vengeance of Tomasso Monaldi, had produced his shooting by De Belloc's cavalrymen. This is only as the operator remembered it. My emissary didn't

dare to try and get a duplicate of the dispatch, which was already on file. The French Government keeps a sharp eye upon its telegraph offices."

"Isn't it curious," asks Burton, "that there is no account yet of the Corsican tragedy in the French journals here?"

"Politics!" answers the detective. "There is an election here shortly, and they fear some complication with the English Government. England is at present the *bête noire* of French politicians. The French statesman who favours in any way England, the villain country, who they say has stolen Egypt and the Suez Canal from France, would meet irresistible defeat at the polls. Consequently, they have concluded, I reckon, to keep this matter in that out of the way island as quiet as possible and to let Corsica attend to its own local killings. I doubt if you will hear of the affair in an official way—at all events not till after the election for deputies. Perhaps that's what makes young Saliceti so eager to do you up. If he stood as a representative of the time-honoured vendetta every rustic commune in his island would give him its vote."

"That being the case," says Barnes, "we have only ourselves to rely upon. Have you made all arrangements about the yacht?"

"Yes, I've got the schooner *Seagull*, Mr. William Jameson, Glasgow, chartered for three weeks.

Jameson is returning to Scotland and is very willing to lease the boat. We have cleared her for Naples. Crew of six men and mate, all Scotch. The captain, as I told you before, has gone to England, so your naval lieutenant must act as your navigator. She is seagoing, seventy foot on the water line, A1 Lloyd's, two boats. She is found as to stores for crew, but as you have suggested, I have put ice and cabin supplies on board, according to the memorandum you gave me."

"Then I think we'll be able to live very comfortably for a couple of weeks," observes Barnes, meditatively, lighting a cigar.

"Yes, you may have to go into some little port for ice, but otherwise, I think, you will find everything to your liking. The *Seagull* has already dropped out of the Vieux Port, where she was laying, and she will be off the Corniche Road as you directed. I'll have a boat on shore at the Roucas Blanc."

"Then the next thing is to get the ladies on board, and that, of course, we cannot do until after dark," remarks Burton. "You had best not be seen about here any more, Emory, but you had better be on board the *Seagull* when we arrive there, so as to turn the vessel over to me. Besides, I want to introduce you to the ladies, who may some time be compelled to ask your aid. Remember, you are to

take nothing but this affair on your hands now, and I expect you to be in Nice when we arrive there. Get a photograph of this Danella, if you can; also see who arrives on the next steamer from either Bastia or Ajaccio, and if this Bernardo Saliceti turns up, notify me if there is any meeting between him and Danella."

"Yes, I'll shadow everything, even you," chuckles the sleuth, grimly. "By the bye, here's Perrier's address in Nice. He is quite often there. You will find him, for a French mouchard, perfectly reliable. In fact, I think I may have to employ him a little about this matter if things grow very warm."

"Of course, you know you have *carte blanche*," answers Barnes. "On consideration, engage two trustworthy men to follow our carriage on horseback this evening. I must take no chances with the ladies in our company. After that, I'll look out for myself." The American's face grows so unpleasant that Emory ejaculates: "Gee whiz!" as his employer goes off to Lady Chartris's parlour to make some necessary financial arrangements with that lady.

Mr. Barnes has scarcely finished these and Lady Chartris has carried away his check delighted, when Maud bounces in upon him, her eyes big with excitement and mystery. "Gee, Marina is a case!" she whispers.

"Why?" asks Burton, glancing sharply at her.

"Why, getting a note from a man the second day she was married and crazy with fear her forty-eight hours' bridegroom will drop onto her little game."

Barnes gazes upon the infant prodigy and emits a low whistle. "You are certainly a hummer, Maudie," he remarks, solemnly.

"You bet!" assents Miss Chartris, who has just stepped in from an exciting interview with Marina that has run about in this way:

The beautiful Corsican bride, apparently having recovered from the first shock of the letter in the Marseilles depot, being dressed, at Enid's request, for her carriage excursion, seems now full of an excited yet morbid anxiety. Obtaining opportunity when Miss Chartris has entered her bedroom to give her a kiss, tender her condolences and get into the affair "with both feet," as the adolescent intrigante expresses it to herself, Marina whispers, a strange pathos in her eyes: "Maud, dear, you have come to give me that letter you picked up—the one I dropped on the floor of the railroad depot when—when I was overcome with the heat this morning."

"Jinks, that's a nice way of putting it—*overcome with the heat?* It was the letter knocked you," returns the Chartris infant, with a knowing wink.

"No matter what it was affected me," whispers the young Corsican lady, intensely. "The letter—I must have it at once! He—he must not see it!"

"I—I didn't pick it up!" mutters Maud, doggedly.

"I saw you! Even when my eyes were closing, I saw you! Give me the letter, child, or I shall have to ask your mother to get it from you for me!"

The horrible possibilities of such a demand impress themselves on Maud with distressing effect; she snivels: "Holy Jones! don't tell ma, she'd skin me."

"Then, the letter!" ejaculates Marina, wildly.

"Well, if you must know, I sold it to Barnes for two boxes of *marrons glacés*."

"Sold that letter? *Ay de mi*, if he shows it to my husband!" And Marina paces the floor in agitated dread.

"Well, that's nice—scared your husband will see a *billet doux* sent by a man that knocked you silly; and you only married two days."

"Not frightened in the disgraceful way you think!" cries the lovely bride, her dark eyes gleaming pure as those of Diana. "Besides, after the last few days, my Edwin could not think harm of me. Of that I am sure."

"Oh, you just wait. You'll work him up good before long," suggests Maud, pleasantly.

"Don't torture me, *miserable!* I have brought too much misfortune on him already." Tears dim the orbs of the Corsican girl. "Tell dear Mr. Barnes that I must see him; that it is very important."

"Why, sure I'll do it, though I don't think he'll help you put up any job on your——"

"Put up any *job?* Another base insinuation from your childish lips and I'll tell your mother you had that letter concealed! Away!" Looking like a frenzied goddess, Marina opens her door and Maud speeds from it.

"Gee," remarks the young lady to herself, as she flits along the hotel passageway and notes Anstruther keeping watch outside his wife's door. "Poor, honest, old Edwin—I'd tell him, only ma would skin me sure. Ma says that all foreign women are saints before and devils after marriage."

Here eyes are still big with suspected intrigue as she continues her conversation with Mr. Barnes by suddenly interjecting: "She wants to see you!"

"Who?"

"Marina, the bride, of course. She wants to give you a hint not to let the cat out of the bag to Edwin about the man whose letter made her faint." Then the girl asks with anxious interest: "You—you are going to remain here for two or three days longer, aren't you, Barnes?"

The American by no means wishes Maud to know of his coming movements; in fact, as to this point, he has directly charged Lady Chartris. He replies hurriedly, yet confidently: "Certainly—of course!"

"Then it's all right."

"What's all right?" The child's eager yet anxious manner startles Mr. Barnes.

Here, Miss Chartris, who has suddenly looked out of the window, trying to hide a telltale face from the piercing glance of her companion, ejaculates almost tremblingly, in the slang she has learnt from him: "Holy poker!"

"What's the matter?"

"Why, there's the man walking up the street who gave me the note that knocked Marina out of time—the one with the scar over his eye. Oh, murder, he's looking up at our windows in the hotel!" Maud dodges back in a frightened way.

But Barnes is already cautiously taking cognisance from another window of the man whose scar identifies him in the throng of passers-by on the Rue Noailles. The gentleman he gazes upon is, though actively built, lounging past with a pair of flashing eyes alertly yet intently fixed upon some window of the hotel near where Burton is standing.

Dressed in the deep mourning of Southern France, a high Corsican hat lends picturesqueness to his costume. A certain family likeness suggests

to Barnes that this man, though nearly fifteen years younger, is the half brother of the dead Count Musso Danella. His dark eyes have the same flame in them, but are brutal rather than subtle. This may have been produced partially by dissipation, for the pallid lips and rather pinched features indicate boisterous nights over the gaming table with its attendant pleasures of wine and women.

"Jingo, this fellow has the same devilish passions as those of his dead brother," thinks Burton, impressed, "only more so, if possible."

All this has been taken in by a glance; great pistol shots have very quick vision. Suddenly the man responds to something he has seen in one of the windows of the hotel by a nasty, sneering grin.

"What the devil did he see in the window?" thinks Barnes, and to Maud's astonishment bolts from the room, runs down the stairs of the hotel, and passes through the office into the street.

In the throng of the rather crowded Rue Noailles, though Burton's sharp eyes are used with great rapidity, he fails to find this man he now feels quite certain must be Corregio Danella.

Then the American glances up at the windows of the hotel and at the third from that in which he had been standing, the one he knows is Marina's chamber, he sees the bride of Edwin Anstruther stag-

gering away. A second later, Barnes's quick eyes, even in the relative darkness of the room, note that the girl sinks into a chair, above her head are extended two graceful arms, their slight fingers clenched in some cruel emotion, some miserable despair.

"Can it be possible that Edwin's wife has given this man some signal from her window that caused his triumph? Of course, she knew him personally; he was the brother of her dead guardian. The clock has just struck four—could it be the time appointed?"

A moment's consideration effaces this thought. "No woman can be more devoted to her husband than the bride of Edwin Anstruther. Whatever the agitated girl has done is intended for her husband's safety. What can that be?"

A second later, he thinks, it must have merely been some sign of woe or fear that had produced the triumph of Corregio Danella.

This reminds Barnes of Marina's request to see him. "I will find out from Mrs. Anstruther the contents of that devilish letter this astute distractor of matrimonial bliss sent her," he thinks, and steps rapidly back into the hotel.

Upon the second floor, finding Edwin still stalking about the passageway and keeping his watch upon his wife's chamber, Burton quite shortly states he

has a suggestion or two as regards their yachting trip to make to Marina.

The consequence is that her husband soon after brings her into the parlour the party has secured for their general use. As he does so, Barnes notices something in the bride's manner to her husband that increases his alarm for her. In the morning, though Marina's eyes showed traces of the sufferings their owner had undergone, they were full of hope as they rested on her bridegroom. Now despair appears to have taken its place as her beautiful orbs linger lovingly yet sadly on the man she adores, and then seem to turn from him agitated by some hidden determination.

Once Barnes thinks it shame. Her face flushes so vividly and she moves so uneasily on her chair as Edwin speaks of getting her to London as soon as she is strong enough to take that long railroad journey.

A moment after Anstruther says, in a loud tone intended for his bride's ears: "Take care of her while I do my packing," adding in a cautious whisper to Barnes: "See if you can find out what is really the matter with my darling. Some devilish thing must have happened to her at the railroad depot. She won't tell me. You discover."

Under these circumstances, Barnes is very eager to learn the balance of the note which had shattered

the bride's nerves. He remembers that Maud had said Marina drew herself up haughtily, resistingly and courageously as she read the first portion; that it was the last few lines of the letter which seemed to conquer her spirit and break her heart; and it is this portion that is missing from the espistle.

"Glad you're looking so fit, Marina," he remarks, lightly, for they have grown into the habit of addressing each other with the familiarity of coming relatives. "Maud told me you wished to speak to me."

"Why, certainly, Burton, I—you—you have read the letter that struck me down in the railroad station. I must beg you not to be cruel enough to even hint to my husband its contents."

"Why, of course. 'Tis best for Edwin, at present, at all events, to be in the dark," returns Barnes, groping darkly himself; adding assuringly: "You must pick up courage, my dear girl. You faced a greater trial only two days ago."

Her answer confuses and astounds her interrogator. "Faced a greater trial?" she says piteously. "Perhaps in one way." After this she gasps for a moment and suddenly cries: "Then you haven't read the letter."

"Read it—most of it. A portion of it hasn't come into my hands yet. Maud said you tore it up."

"Ah, thank God, you missed the last part. Then you might have told my husband and I could never have done it."

"Never have done what?"

"What you will not know till it is done!"

This is said with a resigned calmness that affrights her auditor more than the wildest excited outbreak. He knows enough of women to be now sure that though Marina is racked to her very soul —she will not give tongue till something suggested to her by the letter is accomplished—either for good or evil.

"You'd better tell it to me so that I may advise you," he suggests.

But the beautiful bride pacing the chamber, her hands pressed to her brow, suddenly pauses in front of him and says: "No, I'll be my own counsellor in this matter. I'll fight the dread fight out with myself. I'll try and——"

Her distracted manner adds to Barnes's fear, not of her love and devotion to Edwin, but of her judgment in some project she keeps concealed. He says, imperatively: "You must tell me."

"No, 'tis between my conscience, my God and my husband. Only tell Edwin, tell him, in case——"

"In case what?"

"Oh, you know the cruel things that may happen in such a blood feud which is again revived, now

worse than before. In case I pass from my husband's sight, tell him that I always loved him; that—that I didn't believe. Should I do something he regrets, he condemns, ask him to forgive me; it was because I loved him better than—than my own soul!"

"Confide in me!" The American's voice is commanding. "If you don't, I am compelled to tell your husband of this letter. We can't let you tear yourself into nervous flinders and not know how to aid you." To this he adds, hoping by flippancy to lighten her heart: "Edwin will soon make those pretty lips speak."

"Never, though I adore him!" she cries hoarsely. "I cannot—I will not—it is so craftily, so fiendishly cruel, it strikes my husband and all our future happiness. It is worse than if they killed me as they will some day. They hope to slay not only our bodies, but to destroy even Edwin's love for me before I die."

Barnes, as he looks upon the fair face of the lovely bride, flushing at times with tenderest passion and frenzied devotion, and at others growing pallid as a death mask, thinks how his own immediate wedding to Enid Anstruther has been subtly thwarted by the letter he carries in his pocketbook which he guesses came from the same man. He now knows that his love for his affianced is being assaulted as

well as the honeymoon happiness of these two just mated.

"For the sake of all of us you must speak," he commands.

The answer of the Corsican bride mystifies the American more than ever. She says nobly, yet doggedly: "For the sake of my husband, I am silent."

"You should use every weapon in your hands in this battle which is waged against both your happiness and your life," dissents her adviser, almost sternly.

"Still I am silent," ejaculates the girl, almost hysterically.

"Then you compel me to tell Edwin of the letter," he says shortly.

As Barnes speaks, the bridegroom enters; and woman's tact destroys his opportunity.

In a second as her eyes light upon Edwin, the charming vivacity of Marina's old time manner seems to revive in her. She throws herself enthusiastically but coquettishly into the arms opening for her and cries, half playfully, half tearily: "Edwin, in the railroad depot I received a note that produced my nervous agitation."

"Aha!"

"Mr. Barnes thinks it wise I tell you its contents. I don't. Now, of course, *innamorato mio,*

if you say so, I must do as you tell me. I am an obedient wife." She puts her arms caressingly round Edwin's neck and whispers: "Shall I?" then gives him a tempting little kiss.

"Hang it, Barnes," answers Anstruther, under these allurements, "I have too much trust in my darling to want to read her letters."

"You're a very bright girl to have your husband so soon in subjugation," remarks Burton, gloomily. "But, Marina, in such a vital matter, I warn you to beware of playing your enemies' game."

"Pooh," answers Edwin, who has received another kiss or two, "what do you, a bachelor, know about women, anyway?" Then he jeers in sailor bluntness: "You and Enid didn't hunt up a minister to-day. You are not so enterprising a fellow as I thought you, Barnes, for I am quite certain that I saw consent in my sister's red cheeks and drooping eyes. Take a tip from a Jack-tar—splice your girl the moment she drops her colours. Then you have her, as I have my bride."

At this, Marina utters a subdued yet ghastly sigh, which is destroyed by the kiss of her young husband, and the unfortunate Burton goes silently away.

By himself, reflecting upon his betrothed's manner to him that has been growing colder and more distant each minute since he has tacitly refused to

immediately make himself lord of her trusting loveliness, he cogitates morosely: "Am I not playing our enemies' game also in not wedding Enid? By Heaven, we have not only stilettos against us, but brains in this horrible affair."

But it is too late for a minister now. Their carriage is already at the door to take them away first for a little drive on the Prado to destroy suspicion, then when evening darkness falls upon the land, to the Corniche Road, where the boat will be waiting to put them on shipboard.

The party have very little luggage with them. Their valises have all been slipped out cautiously earlier in the day by Emory, who will place them on the yacht.

Smoking his cigar, as he makes his preparations, the American suddenly exclaims to himself in a tone of relief: "Bah, that flashing-eyed, drooping-lipped, scar-faced brute hardly looked Machiavellian enough to invent such social bombs as have come, I think, between Marina and her husband and Enid and myself. The results of those letters were accidental, I imagine. We've only the real Corsican article, cold steel, to fear, I reckon."

Barnes carefully inspects his pistols again. Besides these, he has only a walking cane to take with him. As he picks his stick up, Miss Maud Chartris flies in to him, excitement and dismay on her face.

"What do you want—more *marrons glacés?*" he asks, savagely.

"Why, Marina and Enid say they are only going out for a drive on the Prado, and they have both got their hand-satchels with them."

"To keep their jewellery safe from bell-boys," mutters Barnes. "Besides, those satchels have powder puffs in them, I imagine."

"Then—you're—you're not going away *now?*" This last very nervously.

"Does this look like it?" says Burton, tapping nonchalantly his boot with his cane. "Enquire at the office and see if I've paid my hotel bill."

This Emory by arrangement will settle later.

"Oh—then it's all right!" A great relief ripples the Chartris girl's face. She swishes her two blonde pigtails merrily about.

"Certainly, it's all right, Maudie. *Au revoir,* till breakfast," and Mr. Barnes goes away with Edwin to take the ladies down to the open barouche that is awaiting them. At the hotel entrace the American whispers to Anstruther: "Put our charges in. I'll stand back and keep my eyes open. No one will be quick enough to harm them. I've got my hand on my pistol."

Acting upon this Edwin places both his bride and his sister in the carriage and seats himself in front of them, looking as carefully to the rear as if he

expected a white-squall. Barnes springs into the barouche, whispers some orders to the driver and they roll away, he keeping his eyes to the front; for a quick glance backward shows that the two men he had directed the detective to engage are following at a discreet distance on horseback.

Gazing on the carriage as it rolls away, Maud says contentedly to herself: "Cracky, I was scared Burton was going before I told it to him," then adds contentedly: "Gee, I'm as smart as a diplomatist," as she fishes a fourth piece of paper out of the bosom of her frock. "If I'd sold all that letter to Barnes at the first jump, I'd have been out of stock in trade. As it is, by to-morrow Marina will be worrying like blazes and Barnes will be so hot about it that he'll come down rich for the rest of this note. Oh, Maudie, you're a winner!" So Miss Chartris goes up to a bread and butter tea with her governess quite contentedly and munches *marrons glacés* surreptitiously over her lessons for the two succeeding hours. Then the carriage not returning with the driving party, the intrigante grows anxious. She sneaks down to the hotel office and whispers to the clerk: "Have they come back yet? You know, our friends—Mr. Barnes of New York and his party?"

"Not yet, Mademoiselle, though I believe their carriage has returned."

"Their carriage *returned?*" Maud darts nervously to her mother's parlour. Lady Chartris is seated engrossed to her heart strings in a French novel.

"Why are you rushing in upon me, you horried child?" cries her mother, angry at being interrupted at the first indication that the heroine wife is untrue to the Marquis, her husband.

"Oh, ma, I thought you'd like to know! Miss Marston says I had such a good lesson in arithmetic."

"Very well, tell Miss Marston to give you another and a longer one."

"Yes, but it's too late now. It's ten o'clock and Mr. Barnes and Enid and the rest haven't come back. When do you expect them, ma?"

"I don't expect them."

"What?" Maud's eyes roll in a dazed way.

"They have gone away."

"Where?"

"To London, I imagine."

"Oh, good Lordy, what a fib!"

"You dare to say fib to me!" shrieks Prunella, springing up and giving her offspring a shake that makes her teeth chatter in her luckless head.

"No, no! Not to you, dear mama—to Barnes of New York. Don't! don't! you don't understand!

The liar said 'Au revoir till breakfast' to me and sneaked away; when I had——"

Maud goes out in such paroxysms of despair that Lady Chartris gasps: "Good Heavens, don't moan so! Have you guzzled bonbons till you've got cramps?"

"No, it's—it's—they—it's the arithmetic, I think," wails Maud, who dare not reveal the cause of her despair.

"Very well, go away—get to bed!" Lady Chartris seizes her novel again. "Stop howling, or——"

"Yes, ma!" Maud flies from the room, and alone in her own chamber sobs, groans and rends her hair, muttering: "Oh, I could have sold Barnes the other part of Marina's letter for *lots*, and now he's gone away and it ain't worth tuppence."

She is about to go despairingly to bed when curiosity mingling with her disappointment, she ejaculates: "Cracky, I wonder what it is anyway," and goes to studying the little quarter of a sheet of letter paper she has drawn from the bosom of her frock.

It is a mixture of French and Italian. She cannot entirely decipher the foreign handwriting; indeed, she can scarcely understand it.

But some passages in it produce such a terrible effect upon the child's nerves that after she has gone

to her little bed she tosses about and sleep will not come to her. Suddenly her very pigtails seem to stiffen with terror; she rises half out of bed and mutters to herself these astounding words: "Oh, jimcracks, what do they mean by killing her, if she *does;* and killing her husband, if she *doesn't?* "

CHAPTER IV

"SUSPECT EVERYBODY!"

"How do you feel, old man?" asks Edwin, as Barnes seats himself in the carriage.

"Like the Czar of Russia," answers the American modestly though unguardedly. For at this hideous joke Miss Enid, seated opposite to him, utters a suppressed shriek and Marina emits a shuddering sigh.

Then the carriage dashes past the numerous magnificent cafés of the Rue Noailles and turns into the wide Rue de Rome, the horses keeping up a smart gait, for Burton has directed the driver not even to check his speed for beggars. So narrowly missing running down some importunate mendicants, they flit between the elms and plane trees with which this beautiful avenue is planted, and passing the Obelisk, enter the even broader Prado.

This fashionable drive of the commercial metropolis of Southern France is now quite full of handsome private equipages, and as the evening comes on, bringing with it a slight breeze from the Mediterranean to produce a pleasant chill in the air, the whole scene is one of animated excitement.

Under ordinary circumstances, the four would en-

joy their carriage exercise greatly, but when sudden death hangs over one and every sense is strained to guard against the intangible, pleasure is necessarily far distant. In addition, the two written communications sent, Barnes now is satisfied, by Corregio Cipriano Danella, are doing some nasty yet very subtle work upon at least three of the members of the party.

Marina, though her beauty attracts the eyes of many who roll by her in carriages, appears to have but one thought, the safety of her husband. Barnes notices with concern that her eyes are dilated by a nervous, hunted, frightened-deer expression that deepens their exquisite passion. Her gaze is always about her husband, as if to warn him of an approaching blow.

Several times she glances apprehensively at the horsemen who canter after their carriage, keeping always at discreet distance.

Marina's nervousness quickens the pistol-shot's searching eyes that now seem to be everywhere. If a beggar approaches and takes off his hat, demanding alms, he is watched as carefully as if he were a rattlesnake coiled to spring. If another carriage rolls too closely by them, every man in it is regarded by the American as if he were a road agent in disguise.

Yet, during this, the unfortunate procrastinator

has time to note not only the supreme loveliness of his fiancée, who might have even now been his bride, but also to perceive in the proud yet resigned manner of the exquisite English girl that she haughtily resents his lack of eagerness to possess the dazzling charms that would—had he said so—have been his very own.

As they drive on Enid's eyes blaze like blue stars. Her manner is daintily ethereal, yet she laughs almost heartily as a lame and blind beggar who had stood demanding alms in front of their approaching equipage, suddenly opens his sightless eyes and springs aside agilely with his paralysed legs to avoid being run down by their reckless coachman. Still, when the crowd of carriages near the Château des Fleurs compels their coachman to draw rein, her eyes grow resolute to meet any unknown danger that may come upon them.

Perhaps this is produced by the two men on horseback attracting her attention.

"Who are they?" she whispers.

And Edwin adds: "I have been keeping a weather eye on those two devils."

Marina only gazes at them and shudders. Her slight hand clings to her husband's sleeve. Her agitation is so great Barnes is compelled to explain that Emory has engaged the men for their protection.

"You think our danger is so imminent as all this?" asks Anstruther.

"I think it wise to take every precaution." Barnes turns his eyes upon the men, but the gloom of approaching night has become so deep that their faces are now absolutely indistinguishable. Besides, both have slouch hats drawn well down. Apparently they wish their attendance not to excite public comment.

Then Barnes and his party drive on again and the American's eyes rest appealingly on his beautiful fiancée as she sits opposite to him, but hers do not answer the tenderness of his glance. In fact, they grow colder under his appeal. Her manner seems to say: "You had your golden opportunity, laggard. It will be a long time before you obtain another."

"Some day my dear one will understand," he sighs to himself and forces his entire attention on the safety of the party from a danger whose very intangibility makes it difficult to provide against.

Meantime they are approaching the Mediterranean. The equipages grow less numerous upon the avenue which they had filled but half an hour ago.

"Do you think it is too early to put the girls on the yacht yet?" whispers Edwin.

"Yes, not dark enough," and Barnes directs the

coachman to take the narrower drive called the Mazargues and go past the race course, reaching the Corniche Road.

All the time the two horsemen jog on behind them at a discreet distance. The sea breeze freshens, the night deepens and they reach the Corniche Road that skirts the sea. All other equipages have left it. Here Barnes changes their course and they return in the direction of the city towards the Roucas Blanc.

Their carriage soon stops near the two small bays upon which are situated the bathhouses. At a little landing place Barnes can just discern in the mist of the water, which adds to the gloom of the evening, a boat with two seamen.

To be certain, he hails and is answered by Emory's voice.

"It's all right," he whispers to the ladies and springs out of the carriage.

The next moment Emory has run up from the landing and is standing beside him. "I'm right glad to find ye here safe," remarks the detective, as he is introduced to Marina and Enid. Suddenly Emory whispers suspiciously to Barnes: "You get the ladies into the boat quick. I told my men not to come near you unless there was danger. I hear their steps coming down. I'll see what they want."

The American sleuth disappears into the dark-

ness, going up from the landing place, while Barnes and Edwin carefully escort their charges through the gloom down the little steps that lead to the boat. It is so dark that it is now a matter of groping; and some little time is occupied in carefully transferring the ladies to the stern sheets of the cutter. Here their hand satchels being placed beside them, a carriage robe is carefully tucked by Barnes about Miss Anstruther.

Performing a like service for his wife, Edwin seizes the tiller, seats himself at the stern and remarks comfortably: "Now all's shipshape! As soon as your sleuth is on board we'll pull out to the yacht." Then he asks one of the two oarsmen: "Have you the *Seagull's* bearings?"

"Aye, aye, sir. She is lying off about a quarter of a mile nigh due south of here. A braw boat she is, yer honour."

"All right," says Edwin, examining a pocket compass he produces. "She might have been difficult to find in the darkness without her bearings. She's a light up, of course?"

"A mast head anchor-glim, sir," replies the man in a broad Scotch accent.

Suddenly Edwin whispers to Barnes: "We've boarders!" and springing up, seizes a boathook and pushes the cutter away from the dock. "Pull quick, my men!" he commands, for the voice of the Ameri-

can detective rings out in the night air: "Look out for yourselves!" and they hear the patter of feet in the darkness running down the walk mingled with a couple of foreign oaths.

Next there is a splash in the water and Barnes says, coolly: "Hold up for a minute, Edwin," and calls: "Is that you, Emory?"

"Yes, thank God!" answers the detective, who is swimming after them.

"Very well, if anybody jumps over after you, I think I can catch him even in the darkness." The American's pistol is in his hand.

Twenty seconds after they drag the dripping sleuth into the cutter.

"You have nothing to wait for now," says Emory, spitting out some salt water. "Get me to the yacht where I can find dry clothes of some kind."

At this, Edwin orders the men to give way, which the two Scotch sailors do with alacrity, one calling: "Pull wi' a will, Jibbie, the chiels ashore 'll be burnin' poudre on us."

"By the blessing of God, you all had a mighty narrow escape," remarks Emory, his voice quivering. "Though how the deuce the men who are after potting you took the places of the Parlez-vous I hired to guard you, is more than I can tell. It's lucky I remembered I'd told 'em not to come near you unless there was trouble. When I heard the

approaching steps, I reckoned there must be danger. I went straight to 'em and by gum, they jumped me. Half a second and I was a dead man."

At this there is a fluttering cry from Miss Anstruther, and Edwin says: "Don't grab my steering arm so frantically, Marina."

The detective pauses.

"Just as well go on," remarks Barnes. "The ladies must know their danger; it is well they know the whole of it."

"At my cry of terror," continues Emory, "the dagger that was right over my breast was stayed, and one of them snarls: '*Diavolo*, this isn't the accursed murderer, Barnes of New York.' Then they whispered some words to me that I don't care about repeating before the ladies and one of them held the knife over me and the other sneaked down towards you, but was too late. You had already got the girls into the boat, I reckon. He came back. They cursed me and let me go. But when they saw I was scooting down the wharf, they started after me, so I jumped into the water and made the boat. They are cursing themselves now, I guess, for letting me get away to warn you."

"Well, they'll hardly dare to follow us on board the yacht," smiles Barnes, for Edwin has hailed: "*Seagull*, ahoy!" to some vessel looming up in the fog.

"Aye, aye," comes the reply, and a moment later the naval officer has laid the boat alongside of the yacht, from which a side ladder has been put over.

"This is Andrew Graham, the mate," says Emory, as an alert young Scotchman assists the ladies to the deck of the fleet little seagoing pleasure craft from whose cabin a cheerful gleam issues.

"You want to get into dry clothes," remarks Burton. "We'll discuss this affair a little further after we have had dinner, which I imagine is prepared."

"Yes, right in the cabin there, and a good one!" replies the detective, whose spirits have risen at the thought of the meal.

Five minutes later, Emory having gone forward and procured a change of togs from the mate, they all sit down in the little cabin, which is brilliantly lighted and its table beautifully set with crystal and china, even some fresh flowers adorning it.

"You've done everything mighty nice, Emory," says Barnes, genially, to the detective, "and I hope your wetting hasn't destroyed your appetite."

"Not a bite," answers the American representative of Pinkertons'.

"Why doesn't Edwin come down?" whispers Marina, nervously.

"Oh, he's skipper now," replies Burton. "He's making all shipshape with Mr. Graham and getting under way."

The noise on deck indicates this is quickly done, for the yacht has been lying with her mainsail hoisted. As soon as the anchor has broken ground and her jibs are put upon her, the *Seagull* is in motion under easy sail.

After giving the mate, who seems a pleasant, quick spoken, intelligent young Scotchman, his directions as to the course and bidding him keep a good lookout for steamers coming up from Naples, Nice and other ports to the eastward, Edwin joins the party at table.

"She is a mighty handy craft," says the young man. "I have tested her a little already."

"Ah, your British tars are up to your biz," remarks Emory.

"Well, an officer in the English navy should be able to sail anything," answers Anstruther, "though I don't suppose I'm quite as familiar with canvas as one of the old-day fellows who never had anything but sheets and halyards and 'trim sails' and 'look out for lee shores' in the days of Nelson. You see, though we are taught seamanship and practise it when youngsters, duty on the deck of an iron-clad has no more to do with handling canvas than if you were trying to navigate a railway train."

With this, Lieutenant Anstruther, after a glance at his bride, remarks: "Now, with a deck under my feet, I feel shipshape and ready for either pi-

rates or land sharks," and so devotes himself with a sailor appetite to a plate of *crême d'asperge*, a delicious sole with shrimp sauce and afterward a *filet mignon* with fresh mushrooms. Delicate little confections and ices as well as some magnificent fruit are put upon the table afterwards by the steward, whose fiery red hair and decided Scotch twang indicate he comes from the North of the Tay.

"Altogether," Enid contentedly remarks, "it is about as good a dinner as one could get at the best restaurant in Paris."

A few minutes later, the gentlemen go on deck to smoke their cigars. Edwin takes his stand beside his Scotch mate, saying: "We'll take it watch and watch, Graham, until the morning," and sends the young fellow below to turn in.

The two ladies are busily making their arrangements in the cabin. The schooner has a main salon, which is used as a dining-room, and two little quarter staterooms, one of which is assigned to Edwin and his bride, the other to Miss Anstruther.

Under these circumstances, the detective and Barnes have a chance for private conversation. They stroll amidships and seat themselves beside one of the boats. The foresail not being set, they have no boom to dodge when the vessel comes about, which is perhaps well, as the conversation takes a turn that makes even Burton forget where he is.

"How shall I put you on shore?" says Barnes.

"Well, in an hour more we'll be off Bandol, I reckon, and if you'll tell Edwin to drop in to the shore a little, you can put me off in one of the boats."

"All right," replies Burton, and speaking to Anstruther, the yacht's course is changed.

"When you are ashore, you'll get the railway, I suppose, to Marseilles. Pay my hotel bill at the Grand there and remember to meet me at Nice at the time appointed."

Here the detective dismays his American employer; he drawls slowly: "Y-e-s, but I'd like to give up this matter!"

"Give up this matter?"

"Why, cert! When that Corsican had his knife over my heart he said a few words of warning, telling me to look out how I got into a blood feud; that this matter was to the death, and if I wanted to live I had better leave it alone."

"You're frightened of the man?" asks Barnes, almost sneeringly.

"No, not exactly frightened, but mighty cautious of him," replies the Yankee, in an impressed tone, "for a fellow who can fix it so that my two French sleuths were thrown off the track and he and his pal took their very places and rode behind your carriage unsuspected and only by God's mercy were

prevented from jumping you and doing you up as you placed the ladies in the boat is a man whose brains make him mighty dangerous."

"Not dangerous enough to cause you to desert these ladies in their extremity. You, an American —I have been told you have a very good nerve."

"Yes, but this kind of an assassinating in the gloom biz is mighty ticklish—however, I'll go you again," returns the detective, after a few more whiffs of his cigar. "I'll risk it once more for the sake of the lovely creature whom you squint at as if she was the apple of your eye, and she looks at you haughty as a sales-lady does at a cash boy—what have you done to rile her, young man?"

For a moment Barnes is about to resent the easy familiarity of Emory's comment upon his courtship, then the thought that this man is probably risking his life for him makes him more affable. "Enid's displeasure arises from my taking your advice," he says shortly. "Miss Anstruther resents my postponing my marriage with her. But, as you suggested, with this damnable threat in my pocket I cannot draw any woman into this blood feud."

"You're right there," answers the detective, "with such a crafty devil agin you, what you want to do is to suspect everybody. You see you cannot be sure where such a snaky fellow will strike you. If it hadn't been for me fortunately walking up that

path wondering why my men came down to you, they would have been upon you while you were putting the ladies in your boat, and would have had some of you sure. I know you can shoot quick and straight, but knives at close quarters are better than revolvers, especially in the darkness. You can bless God for having saved you to-night. Suspect everyone!"

"Suspect everyone!" Barnes mutters to himself and turns his eyes about upon the deck as he speaks.

"Oh, they're all safe here—those bra' Scotch sailor laddies. You saw the mate, he is Scotch also and can be trusted. If you'll put me on shore, I'll be at that villa at Nice ready to tell you everything when you make it. Don't you think the lady—I mean Anstruther's wife—could stand a voyage to England through the Bay of Biscay?" The detective's voice shows how anxious he is that his suggestion be taken.

"As a physician, I don't think she could," remarks Barnes. "You see her neurotic state has been added to by the attack upon us at the landing. It is not her fears for herself, but her fears for her husband. Did you notice how nervous she was before he came down to us at dinner—even though we could hear his voice on the deck?"

They are now interrupted by Edwin. "The lights over there are those of Bandol. We're in ten

fathoms of water. I don't want to venture in any further at night." Then the voice of the young English officer rings out, ordering to cutter to be lowered and manned.

"I go with you as far as the shore," says Barnes.

"No, you stay with the ladies," whispers Emory. "That's what you want to look after. You're the point of danger now. I'll only suffer if I get too nigh to you." As the Pinkerton man goes over the side, he whispers again to Barnes: "Suspect everybody—even your own emotions and doings, and especially those of the women with that crafty cuss who had his dagger so cursed near my heart, working on them."

"Could you recognise the man?" asks Burton eagerly.

"Hardly, but in the struggle my hand caught his face, and I felt a scar over his left eye."

"Great Scott!" ejaculates the American. He is now certain it is Corregio Cipriano Danella who is bent upon revenge for the blood of his dead brother.

As the Yankee detective is rowed away, Barnes paces the deck.

The night is very fine, though extremely dark, and they being near the land, somewhat misty. The yacht's lights, however, burn brightly and a careful lookout is kept. Barnes thinks he has little fear

from the sea while the vessel is in command of Edwin Anstruther. Still the detective's last warning, "Suspect everybody!" lingers in his mind.

Some remarks from the ladies in the cabin indicate that they are not coming on deck this evening.

"You can wager your grog money, Barnes, you'd be happier if you'd spliced before taking this cruise," observes Anstruther, *sotto voce* to his friend. "You'd have a bride with you, like me. Now, no danger of pirates boarding us, Marina and I can forget care for a few days in—in love."

"You may, I cannot," remarks Burton, grimly.

"Ah, Enid's a little offish, is she? Won't come up even and say good-night," grins the sailor. "Didn't like your not accepting what was offered you, eh? When you get a chance take it, my hearty, especially with girls. Now if you'd hunted up the minister, as I recommended to-day, you wouldn't have to stow yourself away on the cabin settee to-night."

This sea-dog suggestion is so disquieting that poor Burton paces the deck and sighs: "By Heaven, I must get this out of my mind! I must think only of the safety of these helpless girls that are now assailed by that crafty Corsican with the scar over his face, Corregio Cipriano Danella, he who must have sent this letter that cuts me off from being the husband of the woman I love until I have

put him under the ground. When I shoot at that gentleman, God help him, it will be to kill."

The boat has now returned.

As the men scramble on deck, Edwin demands: "Did you put your passenger on shore at Bandol?"

"Aye, aye, sir, but the loon went up the dock as cautious as if he feared land sharks."

This revives in Barnes's mind Emory's warning, "Suspect everybody!"

The vessel is soon under way again. He paces the deck smoking his cigar and thinking: "No one can board us in all probability unobserved. We are safe here with the Scotch crew and the Scotch mate." Suddenly the cigar drops from Barnes's fingers; with a start he mutters to himself: "By Heaven, no Scotchman ever concocted that *filet mignon* and that *crême d'asperge*. There's one man on this boat I must keep my eye upon."

"Thinking of land sharks," laughs Anstruther, slapping him on the back.

"No," answers Barnes, shortly, "*I was meditating on our French cook!*"

CHAPTER V

"FOR THE LOVE OF HEAVEN DON'T KILL THE COOK!"

To this rather astonishing announcement the young English naval officer says: "By Jove, the beggar did give us a good dinner."

"Too good!" remarks Barnes, gloomily.

"You wouldn't say that," replies Edwin, "if you had been knocking round the Orient on wardroom commons for the last year. What do you mean by 'too good'? No cook is *too* good."

"And yet I'd feel easier," is Burton's comment, "if the fellow had given us lob-scouse, plum-duff, roast-beef and dishes a plain Johnny Bull cook would have been apt to concoct. In this very important matter of the lives of those ladies below—not to mention our own unworthy selves—I don't propose to blindly trust anyone with foreign associations. They may be all right, and they may not. So I'm going to investigate this fellow, even if his cuisine makes you roll your nautical eyes and smack your naval lips."

"If you find anything suspicious about him," replies Anstruther, grimly, "I'll put him ashore if he can make salt horse taste like broiled chicken."

Acting on this, by a few deft questions to the members of the watch on deck, Barnes discovers that the nautical chef's name is Felix Lebœuf. "That's as I twang it," remarks Gillie, who is standing at the wheel giving him the information. "Coswhite, Mr. Jamieson's regular cook, went along with him to the auld country, and this chiel only come aboard to-day to take his place i' the galley."

"Hum, a new arrival?"

"Aye, sir, and the men dinna like him o'er muckle. Thae loon puts garlic i' th' lob-scouse."

At this Barnes laughs slightly, strolls forward and takes a look into the cook's galley. The fires are out and the regular snoring that issues from it shows the Frenchman is asleep upon his cook chest. "I don't think I'll trouble him to-night," sleepily thinks the American, hesitating to disturb the rest of an artist who had given him such a dinner, "but to-morrow morning I'll have a chat with Monsieur of the dishpans."

The next morning the sun rises brightly on the Mediterranean; its waves are silver. The yacht's course during the night has placed the little pleasure craft well out upon the open sea, Corsica to the southeast of her.

Apparently, the night's rest has increased the ladies' vivacity and the certainty of no danger being near them has improved their spirits.

"Everybody hungry, I hope!" cries Barnes cheerfully, notwithstanding his greeting from his fiancée has been rather formal as they sit down to a delightful breakfast sent in by the artist of the galley and served by the Scotch steward.

"As sharks!" answers Edwin, taking his place as skipper at the head of the table. "This beefsteak makes me think I'm gazing at Pall Mall from the Army and Navy Club."

Apparently the pleasant meal produces almost frivolity in Miss Anstruther; she cries enthusiastically: "And coffee with the aroma of Mocha, and this *omelette aux truffes* worthy of the Maison Doré! I feel as if I were in Paris. We have a great man in the galley, my brother."

"Yes, the fellow forward could put appetite into anyone," assents Barnes, assisting Edwin to do duty on the beefsteak.

"If we could arrange that we run about from one little harbour to another, I think the cruise could be made quite enjoyable," remarks Enid, struggling to be vivacious, but, catching an abrupt gleam of passion in her betrothed's face, her eyes that might even now have been his bride's eyes, grow suddenly haughty, though the young lady's fair lips emit some hidden sighs as she attempts the remainder of her breakfast.

Some little time after, chancing to glance up from

his work with his knife, the sailor husband stays his eating as he places honeymoon eyes upon his bride. For Marina is asking nervously: "Any signs of pursuit during the night?"

"Pursuit?" sneers the tar. "Do you think our friend Cipriano Danella has a couple of revenue cutters in commission to run us down? The *Seagull* is quick enough to show her heels to most sailing craft. Besides, how can he tell what course we've taken? All he can know is that we embarked on some vessel off the Roucas Blanc last evening. We may have gone to Naples; we may be on our way down the Spanish Coast to round the Rock of Gibraltar, and sail the Bay of Biscay to England. On the water we are safe. When we land, the climax of this affair begins." Then the sailor suddenly exclaims: "My Heavens, what's the matter, dear one?" for at her husband's last suggestion, Marina, though she utters no word, has grown of a sickly pallor, and the knife and fork, with which she has been dallying, have slipped from her trembling fingers.

"Nothing," stammers the bride, hiding her face from his glance by picking up her table implements, "only I am not a very good sailor, therefore this delightful cuisine has no charm for me."

As the young Corsican lady rises from the table the English girl gets up also; she seems to be anx-

ious to end her contiguity to a betrothed whose reproachful glances at her cold and rather haughty face have grown embarrassing.

"Would that I dared to take Marina over the surges of the Atlantic to England," mutters the young husband moodily, as Enid and his spouse disappear into their staterooms. Then he suddenly whispers: "Barnes—you noticed her sudden pallor—don't fear to tell me—as a medical man, you are sure my darling has no organic affection?"

"I have told you a dozen times she is as sound as a new dollar," answers the American.

"But her timidity? When I first met her in Egypt, and until that awful wedding night in Corsica, she was courage itself."

"So she is now, *as to herself!* It is for you she fears. Her gentle heart beats only for you. What you said about the climax of this accursed affair coming when we landed again, must have in some way struck a blow upon her nervous system."

About this time the mate, Mr. Graham, puts his head down the companionway and announces that Frenchy, the cook, is jabbering for something that none of them can make out—some folderol or other for his work.

This gives Barnes the opportunity that he wishes of examining the only foreigner on board. He steps up the companion ladder and strolls forward. Mon-

sieur Lebœuf, a dapper little Frenchman in immaculate white apron and cook's cap, his moustache bristling ferociously and his black eyes blazing, is savagely smoking a cigar outside his galley. Barnes offers him a cigarette and thanks him for the two delightful meals he has furnished them.

"Ah, you speak a little French," cries the little Gaul. "*C'est magnifique!* Not a man understands ven I demand ze implements of my art."

"But you have been on English yachts before?" remarks the American, diplomatically.

"*Mais, oui,* vith my Lord Edgarton and vith Monsieur Ogilvie, ze Scotch. They had ze big steamboats. Their stewards spoke ze language of la belle France. But on zis leetle vessel no one understands ven from zem I demand ze proper implements of my profession, so at once I must be put on shore to buy *une couloire. Comprenez?* If it is not to me, I cannot steam the *pouding à l'Angais,* my masterpiece."

Mr. Barnes discovers that Lebœuf wishes a colander.

"All right, you want some holes in a tin pan." The pistol shot steps into the galley. "Will this one do?"

A moment after he has climbed out and hung it on the end of the main boom which runs well out over the stern of the schooner. Producing his re-

volver and standing amidship, the American calls out to the ladies below not to be frightened at the reports as he is going in for pistol practice. Then he makes the tin pan his target and very shortly the Frenchman is screaming in astonishment: "*Diable*, an artist vith ze shoot! *Sacré bleu*, my initials, F. L., in round holes all in ze bottom."

"Might as well keep my hand in," thinks Mr. Barnes, and forthwith gives an exhibition of marksmanship that causes the crew to cheer. He smashes bottles flung helter skelter in the air by the Jacktars and puts bullets through potatoes tossed on high. Finally he tacks a playing card on the tip of the bowsprit and shoots the spots out of it.

"This will be a warning to this dishpan artist, who is the only man of the crew of whom I feel a doubt, not to make me shoot at him," cogitates the marksman, grimly.

But his exploits with the pistol seem to enthuse the Frenchman, rather than dismay him. In his excited Latin way, Lebœuf shouts louder than anyone on deck and fairly screams with Gallic enthusiasm as Barnes winds up by placing a card on edge and spitting it with his unerring bullet.

"*Ciel*, monsieur is a marvel," jabbers the cook. Then he suddenly laughs in Barnes's face and exclaims: "*Mon Dieu*, if monsieur shooted at a man? *Diable*, no mutiny in zis crew!"

Little of this has been witnessed by the ladies, but Miss Anstruther chancing to come on deck at the close of the exhibition, Mr. Barnes explains the matter to her and she soon after sets him to thinking by strolling forward and shortly observing to him that half a dozen pans in the galley are capable of being used for steamers; so the cook need not have made such an ado about the matter.

Later on Monsieur Lebœuf sets Mr. Barnes to thinking again. He makes his appearance and demands determinedly that the yacht anchor off some landing where they can obtain fresh ice.

"Nonsense!" dissents the American. "Emory told me enough was put on board yesterday to last for several days."

"Then Monsieur has been robbed by ze ice-man," answers the Frenchman. "If monsieur vil observe," he leads the way to his galley, which connects with the vessel's ice-chest. Opening this, he remarks: "Ze cold storage, it has all run out. Ver is it? Gone! *Voilà*, not enough for ices *ce soir;* not enough to frappé ze champagne; not enough to preserve ze *legumes* and ze *beurre.*"

Barnes discovers that what Lebœuf tells him is correct. During this hot weather ice is absolutely an essential. After a short consultation with Edwin, Anstruther grumblingly sets the *Seagull's* course for the French Coast.

Three hours before sunset they anchor in the little harbour of St. Tropez. Looking at the retired old French seaport, Edwin remarks: "I don't think there's much danger of these Corsican assassins discovering us in this out-of-the-way place for a few hours," and sends the dingy on shore carrying Monsieur Lebœuf and directing him to make the necessary purchases and bring them off at once.

"We'll keep the ladies safe on board, and no shore-boats shall come alongside," says the skipper.

But a few minutes after, Barnes suddenly remarks that he wants some more cartridges for his pistols, and obtaining the cutter, is rapidly rowed to the landing and disappears in the Sixteenth Century architecture of the town.

Consequently, when Marina and Enid come on deck, the latter discovers her swain is absent and, being now inclined to find fault with her gallant, pouts mentally: "Burton might have asked if I'd like a run on shore also."

But both boats being now at the landing, the ladies are compelled to spend their time rather monotonously looking at the picturesque little port, though Marina does little of this. The very sight of France seems in some occult manner to affright the beautiful woman as she leans upon her husband's arm. To him she whispers, nervously: "Will we get to Nice to-day?"

"Not with this wind," remarks Edwin. To this he adds, suddenly: "Dear one, you seem afraid of that place."

"Not while I have you by my side," she answers, ambiguously; and clings more tightly to his arm.

During this, Miss Anstruther, rather moodily with a marine glass inspects the neighbouring fishing boats in the roadstead, some of these seagoing craft. Among them is one whose graceful lateen rig attracts the English girl's attention. Having little else to do but to admire the almost mediæval fortress on the hill with the modern batteries around it and the distant statue of De Suffren on the quay, the young lady several times puts her binocular upon the lateen-rigged fishing boat, and in the course of two hours' weary waiting, becomes quite familiar with its graceful outlines and rig.

About this time Barnes returns in the cutter and is not overgraciously welcomed by his fiancée, who, though generally level-headed, has now nursed the slight that she conceives her love and trust had received yesterday, into a fervid jealousy under which each unintentional omission of service in her betrothed is an additional offence.

Together they pass a tiresome hour till Lebœuf makes his appearance in the dingy.

"Why in the dickens weren't you off before?" Anstruther calls out to the cook; and the great culi-

nary artist ascends the side ladder jabbering an almost piteous tale of the difficulty of obtaining ice, fresh meats and vegetables at this time of the evening in this dead and alive town. "But I am happy to say," he favours the ladies with an effusive bow, "I have obtained zat which under my art vil become meals worthy of even zeir attention for several days."

To this Edwin gives slight heed. He is in a hurry to make an offing before darkness sets in, and already has the dingy hoisted up, has broken ground with his anchor and the *Seagull* is under way.

As they round the Cap des Salins, Enid, who is still using the marine glass, though it is now growing dusk, notices that the lateen-rigged fishing boat has hoisted sail also, and apparently being a very swift craft, is following them rapidly.

That evening, Monsieur Lebœuf sustains his reputation as a culinary artist. In addition, he has obtained some beautiful violets and graciously stepped in himself from his galley to arrange them with Gallic taste artistically on the dining-room table in the little salon. During this, the petite cook, being a dark-eyed, romantic and ferocious looking little fellow, attracts very favourable attention from the ladies.

Still, though the champagne is cooled to a nicety and the various courses are as delicious as they

would be in a first-class Parisian café, none of the yachting party enjoy the meal. The English officer looks with wistful glance upon his bride, and notices that her spirits have drooped rather than improved during the day. Her big eyes turn from his, a far-away, dreamy misery in them, but once or twice, when his attention is called from her by the exigencies of the meal, her grand orbs rest on her husband filled with unconquerable resolution and devoted self-sacrifice.

Miss Anstruther, conversing with her swain, has graduated from aggressive vivacity during soup and fish to a coldness at dessert, equalling the ices she is eating.

Fortunately Barnes is too occupied with certain mental calculations and considerations to give great heed to his sweetheart's eccentric attacks, though in a dejected, abstracted way he feels them. He is cogitating: "How shall we best make Johnny Crapeau innoxious?" for several occurrences ashore have made him exceedingly suspicious of Monsieur Lebœuf.

Cigars end this almost uncanny feast—the American goes on deck to smoke his and Edwin, puffing a big Imperial, relieves the mate in his charge of the vessel.

As for the ladies, they retire early, and awake

the next morning to find the vessel floating midway between the picturesque cliffs of Monte Carlo, that are hazy in the distance, and the mountains of Northern Corsica, just a little to the southeast.

The sun is bright but pleasant, the sea smiling, the light breeze like the breath of paradise. The yacht's deck would be Heaven to the charming women and gallant men who lounge under its sailing awning, did not the emotions that the crafty communications of Cipriano Danella have placed in the ladies' hearts, change the nautical paradise into a nautical Hades.

After breakfast, of which everybody eats so little that Monsieur Lebœuf, gazing upon the untouched viands, utters a snort of rage. Finding his lady love still cool to him, Mr. Barnes, in very desperation, goes to shooting again.

The crew, anxious to see his skill, toss more bottles into the air and throw up more potatoes for his unerring bullets, and every time the American puts a pellet into one of them he wishes sardonically it was the heart of Cipriano Danella. This seems to make his aim very true; and his success is so astounding that the crew raise a cheer as he puts one bullet through two potatoes thrown into the air at the same time as they cross each other in their flight.

The reports of his pistol floating over the placid water reach a considerable distance. At all events, they and the cheer excite some comment on a little felucca that has been sailing an almost parallel course; apparently a very fast craft, it draws somewhat nearer.

Attracted by this, Enid turns her sharp eyes from the pistol shooting she has been watching languidly and suddenly exclaims: "Why, it's the lateen-rigged fishing boat we saw in the harbour of St. Tropez yesterday afternoon."

"Are you sure?" asks Barnes, with some concern in his tone, as he ceases his target practice.

"Certain," replies Edwin, who has put his sailor eyes upon the craft. "That felucca's got a peculiar cant to her mainsail I'd know anywhere." To this he adds: "I wonder where's she bound, to the sardine fishing off Cape Corso?"

At this information the American gazes very unpleasantly toward the little cook, who is perched forward beating some eggs and enjoying the exhibition of marksmanship. Soon after he calls Enid to him and suggests: "You used to do pretty well with the pistol yourself, young lady, at Monte Carlo—you recollect?" He reloads his revolver and places it in her hand.

"After your exhibition I should make myself a laughing stock to the crew," she dissents, coldly.

"You may need to use this weapon some day," he says almost sadly, "and when you do——"

"Oh, you want me to murder somebody," she answers, almost frivolously; and the young lady carelessly bangs about with the weapon, making some good practice on a floating bottle. Suddenly she notes that it is the very pistol that, in Monte Carlo in his efforts to win her heart, her Burton has taught her to use. At the tender memories of that blessed time her hand trembles, she misses an easy shot or two, passes him the revolver and wanders sorrowfully toward the taffrail. Her beautiful eyes fill with tears.

'Tis only forty-eight brief hours since they arrived at Marseilles and were so close together. How eager her lover had been to possess her; they were to be wedded in three short days. A few hours later he had practically refused immediate nuptials. Against this, her pride is always flying up haughtily, uncompromisingly. She will punish the procrastinator who does not value her sufficiently. Girl-like, she doesn't stay to ask herself the reason for which this man who had seemed so devoted to her had postponed the wedding. Like Calypso she tries to show the unfortunate Barnes what vivid bliss he has declined. This, the devil aiding her, she does with the sweetest diabolical tact. Turning to the gentleman she is to torture, she says, sweetly:

"Burton, are you not going to get me a deck chair?" and inveigling her fiancé to her side, she displays such vivacious charms of intellect, such graces of manner, such tender consideration, that the American gazes on her more eager than ever, if possible, to make his delightful sweetheart his own.

But the more ardent the gentleman, the greater the coolness, ethereal, intangible, that the lady always keeps between them, all the while tormenting her betrothed's very soul by showing how passionately devoted she would be were this a honeymoon dalliance.

But this coquetry becomes too humiliating to the high-spirited girl. She rises to go below. Yet at the companionway, she tenders her swain a hand, looks in his eyes and murmurs in subtle cruelty: "Burton, in Marseilles I thought you were wrong in postponing our nuptials, but perhaps after all it is better to know each other more profoundly than we did in our short two months' acquaintance. So we will be good friends—till——"

"Till when?" mutters Barnes, hoarsely. In his passion he has forgotten the awful threat proclaimed against the woman he dares to make his wife.

His betrothed's light, airy laugh almost mocks him. As Miss Anstruther haughtily glides down to her stateroom, the beauties of her spirited face

and graces of her superb figure made a vision of loveliness upon which the American gazes very much as a dog after a vanishing bone. Pacing the deck, he remembers, and curses Cipriano Danella for the devilish document that rests upon his breast which separates him from his exquisite fiancée who would have been his wife for the asking, but now—may never be!

This doesn't make him feel merciful to anyone suspected to be the Corsican's emissary or adherent. Barnes begins to watch like a cat the French cook, who is now cheerfully making a ragout for the crew's supper.

The party in the cabin dine—both gentlemen now apparently with some weighty matter on their minds. His wife hears Edwin whisper to the American as they go on deck from the dining-table: "I'll take a look for the felucca—the beggars came about as soon as we did off Cape Corso."

Anything that suggests danger to the man of her heart causes Marina profound uneasiness.

The consequence is that the bride's sleep is restless, and she tosses wakefully on her pillow. Her husband's watch is on deck, and every swash of the waves outside says to her the day is approaching when they will land at Nice, where if she would protect the life of the man she adores she must do the awful thing.

About four o'clock in the morning, he having been relieved by the mate, she hears her husband descend the companionway to the little salon. He is about to enter her stateroom when Barnes's footfall is heard upon the companion ladder and the American says: "Come on deck, Edwin. That infernal felucca is still dogging us. I have discovered the villain signalling her. We must act at once!"

The footsteps of the two men indicate that they rapidly ascend to the deck. There is some danger on board—danger for her husband. Marina, throwing on a lace wrapper, steps into the salon.

There another lightly clothed young lady meets her. "Did you hear them?" asks Miss Anstruther, in a gasping breath. "There is peril to those we love on deck."

Then the two glide with light feet to the gloom above.

In the cookhouse, Barnes and Edwin are confronting the little Frenchman who, seated upon his galley chest, is uttering cries of affright, for the stalwart sailor with a marlinspike in his hand and Barnes with his pistol ready have unpleasantly and abruptly disturbed his slumbers.

"Messieurs, I am innocent as a babe unborn!" stammers the affrighted dishpan artist.

"Innocent!" snarls the American, "when you left your galley fire unbanked against orders, and

your porthole open so that this red light would indicate our course to that fishing boat that has dogged us every tack from St. Tropez."

"Innocent!" snarls the American, "when you went on shore at that port to get ice and sent a telegram to Marseilles, and then lingered there, pretending to buy vegetables till a wire could be received from that devil Danella. The only question, Edwin, is shall we put him ashore or throw him overboard!"

Lebœuf utters a faint shriek: "*Assassinat!*"

It is answered. Two lovely creatures in exquisite dishabille fly in. One cries, excitedly: "For the love of the Virgin, spare him!"

The other implores: "For Heaven's sake, don't kill the cook!"

But both stand between marlinspike and pistol and the threatened Frenchman.

CHAPTER VI

LADY CHARTRIS'S NEW SUITOR

"CIEL, you speak my language," ejaculates Lebœuf, in mixed English and French, knocking over some pans and kettles and sinking on his knees before the beautiful beings who defend him. "Tell you zese Anglais, who cannot understand my explanazion, zat I am no traitor, zat I am cook and nothing else!" he cries to Marina. "Have I poisoned anyone? *Diable*, no, my salads were marvellous; my entrées gave no indigestion. Zen why do zese men threaten me with death?"

"See if you cannot get out of the beggar some logical explanation of his peculiar conduct," mutters Edwin, gloomily.

"You have frightened the poor man so he cannot make you understand," remarks Enid severely.

"Then, ask him to tell you," says Barnes, "why, when we called for ice at St. Tropez he surreptitiously sent a telegram to Marseilles and then delayed us three hours at that port till that fishing vessel, probably directed by wire, got under way to dog our footsteps."

"And why, to-night, against the regulations of my vessel," adds Anstruther, "he kept this galley fire unbanked so that the light shining through his open porthole indicates to the felucca what craft it is to pursue."

Marina puts these questions to the cook and translates the following answer: "The ice was necessary. After I am on shore to get it, I sent a telegram, as I promised, to Monsieur Deupez, who had come to me in Marseilles and said: 'You go on the *Seagull*. The Café Vefleur will want you as soon as their grand chef Meudon goes to Paris? To engage you, they must know where you are. To miss your services would be a blow for the great restaurant. So they can communicate with you, telegraph me immediately on landing from each port the yacht stops, that they can get you the instant Meudon leaves.' He gave me money for this. Therefore the moment I am on shore, I telegraph simply: 'St. Tropez. I am here. Lebœuf.' Soon I received a return message: 'Hold the yacht three hours.' I have vegetables to buy, also flowers. That takes time, after the market is closed. I don't hurry. What matters if a pleasure yacht leave a little later? From Marseilles I receive no further answer. The chef of the Vefleur has not yet gone, so I come on board. This night, the morning watch want coffee; Monsieur Graham say give it to them, so I leave

my fire unbanked. It was very hot; I open the porthole of my galley. That's all. *Voici*, what I have done is simply business. I am a great cook. The Café Vefleur wishes to engage me; that is all."

"Aha," cries Enid generously; "you see the chef simply expected to get a good position in the kitchen of a leading Marseilles restaurant."

Listening to this, Edwin and Barnes go into consultation. Probably the memory of his magnificent cuisine makes them lenient to the artist. "I believe the little beggar is innocent," says the sailor.

"Simply a matter of vanity," remarks Burton. "He thought they wanted him very much for the Café Vefleur."

"If we don't put the little chap on shore, we must trust him," remarks the American. Then he says briefly to Marina: "Please show Lebœuf what danger he has placed upon us by his telegram."

And this being explained to him by the beautiful women, both fair ones almost speaking together, Lebœuf beginning to comprehend the plot against even their lives, the little Frenchman breaks out excitedly and gallantly in a mixture of polyglot: "*Mille tonnerres*, murder you, angels of mercy? Nevaire! I, Felix Lebœuf, vill defend you both vith my life." He seizes and kisses their hands.

"Zese assassins shall answer to me for making me zeir instrument. No more telegrams while I am a *Seagull.* Zat I swear to you," and the little fellow's eyes glow with gratitude as they rest upon the gentle creatures who, as they have stood between him and marlinspike and pistol, have seemed divine in mercy.

But despite the innocence and fealty of Monsieur Lebœuf, Edwin and Barnes leave his galley dismayed. This additional evidence of the crafty assiduity with which they are being followed makes both men very serious, though it affects Marina's delicate nerves even more intensely, and Enid shudders in the soft night air at the thought that the hand of the assassin seems still upon them.

"We must settle exactly how we proceed," whispers Barnes to Edwin, the two ladies having retreated to the stern. "What do you propose?"

"Why, as not only a sailor but a man of common sense, I propose to get away from these sneaky devils as far as possible; crack on everything, round Sardinia, drive for the Strait of Gibraltar and up the Atlantic and Bay of Biscay to England."

Barnes's glance rests upon Marina, who has wandered to the stern, an increased terror on her spirituelle face. "Medically, I do not think, in her present neurotic state, your wife could endure the voyage," he answers. He glances over the stern—

far away in the gloom of the coming morning is the felucca. "There's practical proof that the vendetta is ever following us," he says, simply. "That cruel craft is sent to dog us to any port where we may land. In England, you will be too prominent to escape notice. Besides, do you or I want to live our lives always looking over our shoulders for some enemy behind us? No, there is one way—my original plan."

Filled with the deadly determination of the Saxon race when their women are assailed, he continues shortly:

"Get the ladies concealed and guarded as carefully as possible with Lady Chartris at Villefranche, then you and I turn about and meet these devils, and, if necessary, destroy them; at all events, destroy the man who has the money, that permits these assassins to follow us to the ends of the earth."

"By Heaven, you are right," answers Edwin.

"Now, the best way to do it?"

Over this they hold consultation, and the result is that next morning when they are off Porto Ferrajo, still finding the felucca in sight, they take the following action. That day, sailing well beyond the famed island of Monte Cristo, the night coming on dark and heavy, Anstruther puts out every light on the vessel and turns about, and the next morn-

ing, piloted by Graham, who knows this sea, they are alone at anchor in a little cove, sheltered by the sterile rocks of Gorgona.

Here the English officer changes the appearance of the *Seagull* almost entirely. Paint pots are got out and she soon has a black hull; Miss Anstruther, who is now interested in the matter, painting a new name, the *Wildfowl*, on a piece of canvas, that is tacked over the stern. Then both topmasts of the vessel are sent down on deck and a leg-of-mutton mainsail that Graham reports in the vessel's sail locker, is bent on the main boom, the gaff being removed. In addition, the rigging is overhauled and made more slack and slouchy like that of some careless merchant trading schooner.

So the next day, beating out upon the sea between Elba and Corsica, is a very different vessel to the brilliant pleasure craft that left Marseilles. Upon its deck are people also changed.

The intimacy of a yachting excursion to young men and young women who love each other, generally makes the deck of the craft under soft suns fanned by refreshing breezes, nigh onto a heaven, but haunted by the supposed deft letters of Cipriano Danella, the *Seagull* is an inferno.

"The deck of this vessel has become," Edwin mutters gloomily to Barnes, "nigh unto hell. Can't you see," he whispers despairingly, "that every day

Marina grows more anxious and more nervous? My God, it is for me."

This remark is made to the American as the two men sit smoking between the main and the foremast late the next evening.

"Did you notice," adds Anstruther, with a sigh, "she had no appetite?"

"You mean your sister?" says the American.

"Certainly not; Marina! My wife didn't eat a mouthful."

"Neither did Miss Anstruther!"

"Nonsense! Enid was enthusiastic over our parlez-vous cook's culinary triumphs."

"Yes, with her lips, but not with her teeth," mutters Burton, grimly. "Womanlike, she cried out about *filet mignon* and *omelette soufflé* and affected to eat—but——"

"But stored away no cargo," suggests Anstruther. "So much the better for you, old man; when a girl gets off her food she's hard hit in some other part of her anatomy than her stomach. My sister's a good sailor, so it isn't sea sickness affects her."

"Sea sickness!" jeers Barnes, savagely. "Can't you see that every hour Enid grows more cold and more haughty to me, punishing me because I didn't wed her that day in Marseilles, when even Emory, the cold-blooded Yankee detective, shuddered and said it would be a crime for me to marry with this

devilish threat I carry in my pocket against any woman who is unfortunate enough to become my wife."

"It concerns my sister; supposing you show it to me!" suggests Edwin.

"Supposing you show it to *me!*" comes to them in a sad yet clear voice from the neighbouring cutter.

"My God, you overheard?" Barnes faces his beautiful fiancée as she steps from the large boat that, after the merchant fashion, has now been stowed on the deck amidship.

"Certainly! Hoping I had done your love an injustice, I have been trying to overhear some such revelation as this for the last few days." The girl's eyes are beaming now, tender with love and hope.

"No, no; it is too horrible!" shudders the American, whose hand had been almost at his pocket when her words had smitten him.

"If my brother could read it, surely it will not blast my eyes," remarks the young lady, trying to be calm, though she is trembling. Then she breaks forth almost passionately, "You owe this to my love for you. Since you seemed reluctant to wear me as your bride, to accept my wifely devotion, my pride has suffered so much that you, Burton, cannot deny me the sight of that letter so that I may again trust the ardency of your desire to make me yours."

"Better not," dissents Barnes, who has grown cooler as his sweetheart has become excited.

"I demand it!" she extends her delicate hand determinedly.

"Best give it to her," remarks her sailor brother, grimly.

"You advise it, then?"

"Yes, she will never rest without it now, if I know Enid of old." Edwin caressingly places his arm about his sister's *svelte* waist; then suddenly exclaims: "My Heaven, she is trembling, Barnes. She is almost hysterical. You must let her see it."

Barnes silently places the accursed threat against the woman whom he dares to marry and her offspring in the slight hand of his betrothed.

She carries it to the binnacle light and reads it carefully twice over. Then she returns to them, her eyes brilliant with determined devotion, yet swimming with tenderest love. "You let such a chimera as this little piece of paper, the ravings of some maniac on revenge, stand between you and my love."

"No, no; this threat—you have had proof enough—is a menace all our lives. I desire to put its author where he can do no harm to you before I wed you."

Then what Barnes has feared comes to pass.

"*Before? After* you wed me!" cries his fiancée, in exalted mood. "Let us together face and annihilate this fiend. Don't you think I can aid and sup-

port you against this atrocious conspiracy that threatens your life, better as your wife than if separated from you by the miserable doubts and uncertainties that have come between us in the last few days."

"But remember this is an undying feud. Think what my self-reproach would be if I let your love for me bring miserable death to you, my adored," whispers Barnes, his passion kindled into more brilliant flame by the devotion of his delicate but resolute fiancée.

"My death couldn't happen, sweetheart, unless you died also, Burton," she says simply.

But Edwin, who had taken the paper from the excited girl's hand and strode to the binnacle light to read it, now returns with hasty step and shudders: "Think what this devil threatens to any woman who weds this man!"

"Think you also!" answers his sister, "how your wedding Marina brought you into this accursed blood feud. Would you now give up your bride?"

"Give up Marina?" he mutters, aghast. "Not with a drop of blood in my body!"

"Then, Edwin, I demand of this gentleman, who says he loves me, that he weds me the moment we go on shore at Nice even if it brings me into the unhappy feud proclaimed against him. No, no; don't refuse me, Burton," she whispers, determinedly,

"'tis the last chance. You wed me then or *never* wed me! If you cannot trust me with your woes, I'll not take part of your joys."

More enamoured than ever with the charming girl who will risk death to be his bride, Barnes silently extends his arms, and she falling into them, the yacht's deck becomes a heaven to these lovers.

Edwin turns toward the binnacle, muttering to himself: "Bully for Enid's pluck!" then sighs: "But wait till she fears for her husband as Marina does for me." A moment later he is only the skipper of the vessel as he inspects with careful eye the yacht's course and sees that there is a sharp lookout kept forward.

The next day the sun again rises bright over the Mediterranean. The felucca is never sighted. Monsieur Lebœuf serves meals fit for a fairy princess in the salon, and Enid and Barnes have such appetites the cook is delighted. In their happiness, even Marina seems to have regained her confidence. If not, she simulates it very well. Perhaps she is stimulated to this, because, acting under Barnes's advice, Edwin has again questioned her as to the letter that had caused her to faint in the Marseilles railroad depot.

The consequence is that a few days later the *Seagull*, under the name of the *Wildfowl*, drops her anchor in the little bay at Villefranche, coming in,

not like a sprightly yacht, but like a slow, lumbering, carelessly sailed and inadequately handled merchant craft.

It is now early evening. Mr. Barnes's immediate object is to discover the villa that Lady Chartris has rented and occupied. Before he left Marseilles, he had asked that lady to decorate her cottage with a French flag. This would create less comment than an English one, and the American wanted some signal by which it could be easily and directly distinguished.

Barnes places his marine glass on the little town of Villefranche nestled under the forests of Mont Boron and snuggled in between the head of the bay and the naval station. On the latter floats the banner of France, but on none of its outlying villas can he see the signal he had suggested.

To avoid the curiosity of passing boats, Edwin has anchored near the Beaulieu side of the bay. Upon this Barnes now directs his glass. Looking it over, the American thinks it will be much more probably the location of Lady Chartris, as it has a number of pretty villas, nestled among olive, almond and orange trees, a good many of them having water frontage and several being possessed of boat landings, as he suggested. But on none of them floats the flag of France. He is almost putting his glass aside preparatory to a journey on shore to

determine the location of Lady Chartris when he suddenly exclaims: "Hang that Maud!"

"Maud!" cries Edwin, who has been busy in making the vessel shipshape. "Is she above the horizon?"

"Very much," laughs Barnes. "Notice that overgrown girl romping with the big dog and waving the French flag at him. That flag, I imagine, was to have been our signal." Then he inspects the villa carefully and is pleased to see that a good solid brick wall of sufficient height to exclude any but very energetic intruders surrounds its pretty garden. Backed as it is toward the sea by the wooded promontory of St. Jean, the house, which is fairly large, seems quite retired; a good many fig and several orange trees both in blossom and in fruit, as well as the oleander and arbutus keep it from the observation of the neighbouring lanes. Only on the water side are its lawns open to view, and this portion of the quiet bay appears at present devoid of boats.

A light flight of stone steps that enter the water and a tasty little floating wooden landing stage indicate the former owner of the villa had been aquatic.

"That's just the place to put the ladies on shore as soon as it's dark," remarks Edwin, for the two young men had concluded it would be best to make their entry into Villefranche very quietly.

"Very well, order the cutter away," says Barnes,

"and I'll get ashore and see that everything's all right."

As his foot is on the side ladder, a blushing but radiant young lady steps to him from the salon and whispers bashfully: "It is to-morrow evening."

Though the atrocious threat against his wife is still on his breast, Barnes says no word to dissuade her; the graces of her figure and the loveliness of her face make him want her so.

In a few minutes the American is at the little landing stage. As he runs up the stone steps, Maud's bright eyes light upon him. The girl stops her romping with the big dog, commands: "Down, Marouche!" and crying: "Glory, glory, Mr. Barnes of New York. I thought you were in London!" flies down to him with additional exclamations of surprise and delight.

Miss Chartris's face is alight with excited joy. Here is her customer that she had thought lost, come back to buy for many bonbons the last quarter of that Marina letter.

"Where is your mother, Maud?" remarks Burton, pleasantly, as the girl snuggles one of her rather soiled hands into his.

"Oh, mamma is in high form. She's in the house, there. She's so blessed easy, I think I'm going to have a step-papa," answers Miss Chartris, gaily.

"Ah, Von Bülow," remarks Barnes, sententiously.

"Perhaps. But mamma has *other* admirers now," returns Maud, roguishly imitating the arrogance with which her widowed mother would make this announcement.

This news is not at all satisfactory to Mr. Barnes. The more followers Lady Chartris has lounging about, the less will be the retirement of the villa.

"Very well, run off and play, Maud; I'll see you a little later," he remarks, glumly.

They are entering the ample portico of the house.

"Did you bring *marrons glacés* with you?"

"No, but if you're a good little girl, there are *marrons glacés* in Nice. You remember the first I bought for you, the time I met——" Barnes's eyes glow at the happy memory.

"Enid and me in the carriage on the Promenade des Anglais, and I told you about her other one. Come out after you've seen her, and I'll tell you about mamma's other one—if she's too bashful," laughs Maud, and goes to romping again with Marouche, who has followed them, wagging his tail.

Lady Chartris at her door receives generous Mr. Barnes effusively. "The villa is perfectly delightful, thank you, dear Burton," she observes pleasantly. "I selected it as you wished—just near enough to be in touch with the gaiety of Nice and far enough away for the honeymoon retirement of Edwin and his bride."

Leading him into a delightful drawing-room, she adds: "You must see what a charming home I have for all of us. Marina and Enid are on the yacht, I suppose?"

"Yes, the ladies will be here this evening, my dear Lady Chartris," assents Barnes. Then he asks, desirous to know if the privacy of the villa has been preserved: "You have driven into Nice once or twice since you arrived?"

"Yes, I've only been here five days, and have been literally overwhelmed with attentions," Prunella remarks, rather grandly. "My horses"—Barnes had paid for them—"take me into Nice in twenty-five minutes over that beautiful forest road."

"Ah, and Von Bülow?" he suggests, roguishly.

"Oh, Baron von Bülow was in ecstasy at my presence. Franz gave me a lunch at the Casino."

"Oho, it has got so far as 'Franz,'" laughs Burton. "And your other admirers?" his tone is insinuating. "You cannot persuade me you hadn't more than one, Lady Chartris."

"Oh, several, but I—I don't like to speak about them." The widow's face becomes rosy.

A good deal of this has been said as Prunella has been showing Mr. Barnes about the pretty house, and he has inspected the rooms set apart for Edwin and his bride and Miss Anstruther.

From the last of these, Tompson, Enid's English

maid, greets him with a pleasant courtesy and says proudly: "Please tell my young missus that I brought all her trunks and Mrs. Anstruther's, too. That busybody American, Emory, said I was only to bring the two he covered with canvas without names on them, but I know how much ladies like to have their dresses, and I fetched every blessed valise."

Barnes groans internally. The officiousness of the abigail has brought additional danger of their retreat being discovered. "After this," he observes curtly, "do you obey orders, Tompson."

Then, despite his hostess's suggestion, for Lady Chartris has a lovely chamber overlooking the water for him who is really the master of the villa, Burton selects for his own use a much inferior bedroom, but one that gives him a commanding view of all the country lanes that lead to the grounds, remarking easily: "Any place will do for me, Lady Chartris. Don't bother yourself too much for a bachelor. I'm accustomed to roughing it; I've slept for the past few days on a cot in the yacht's salon.

"But seeing that everything is all prepared, I'll bring Marina, Miss Anstruther and Edwin on shore this evening. Please make no preparations for us. Treat us all *en famille.* I think I'll go down to my boat."

As he leaves the house he suddenly asks: "Are there any letters for me?"

"Why, yes. A Mr. Emory, who acts as your agent, I presume—he paid your bill at the Grand Hotel—came to me as I was leaving Marseilles and asked me to deliver this personally." Lady Chartris runs upstairs, and returning, places an epistle in Burton's hand, adding: "Here is also another addressed in the same hand that arrived three days ago, under enclosure to me."

Anxious to inspect these, the American turns aside from the garden walk to the landing, and finding a bench under an oleander tree, sits down to peruse them quietly. The contents of the first makes him knit his brows.

It reads:

"MARSEILLES, May 27, 1883.

"MY DEAR MR. BARNES:

"I send this by Lady Chartris. Any further communications until I again see you will be mailed under cover to that lady, as I dare not give our adversary any chance of finding your location by the post, for we have to deal with somebody whose devilish ingenuity beats that of Old Nick himself. The way the cuss substituted his own assassins in place of the two Frenchies I had hired to ride behind your carriage and guard you when you left Marseilles, will prove this.

"He must have got onto me immediately after you employed me. Someone must have followed you and seen our chat at the Hotel des Deux-Mondes and guessed that you engaged me. All that day I must have been shadowed so slick I never reckoned it. By this means they must have guessed that I hired Jamieson's yacht for you and the men

to guard you to the embarkation. Any way, the two Frenchmen, who were to see you safe, while waiting for you and party to get into your carriage, left their nags at the door of a wine-shop just round the corner from your hotel, in the Rue du Musée, and stepped in to liquor, and that is the last either of the bums know about anything until they woke up with a thundering headache and were told they had been asleep in the wine-shop for the last six hours.

"When they came out, about midnight, they found their nags waiting for them, but so bunged up they must have carried the two men after you till they jumped me at the Roucas Blanc. I have questioned them and they admit that a bystander asked them to drink wine with him.

"In addition, if it isn't too late, I want to warn you about the cook for the *Seagull,* whom Graham hurriedly engaged. The devil who's running this vendetta on you may have got to him also in some way, though everybody about the docks says that Lebœuf is square.

"I shall be in Nice not later than June 4th, as from what you said to me I reckon you won't be back before that time.

"Yours anxiously,

"Elijah Reuben Emory."

Then he opens the second letter from the American detective, dated June 2d. It contains a receipted bill from the Grand, that he had paid for Mr. Barnes, and also a statement that young Bernardo Saliceti had arrived from Ajaccio on the Wednesday boat, but so far as Emory could discover, had met no one in Marseilles, though he had received some telegrams.

"I am onto this young Corsican cock-a-doodle," wrote the detective, "and as I find he is leaving for a trip along the coast toward Nice I shall follow him to see if he will lead me to the head villain.

"I've also written to Perrier, whom you can trust, to look out for you. His address in Nice is 239 Rue Palermo. You mention to him 'Vendetta,' and he'll know you and reply, 'Marseilles.'"

It ended with a curious postscript. "I have just discovered that young Saliceti's first stop is St. Tropez."

Mr. Barnes has very little time to turn these communications over in his mind, for he is interrupted by a sudden swish of short skirts and Maud, standing beside him, demands: "How much for mamma's other suitor?"

"I don't believe I want him, Miss Bribery and Corruption," mutters Burton, being anxious to reflect upon Emory's letters.

"Not curious to know of the man who brought mamma home yesterday?" she asks eagerly, "the chappie who kissed her *sure;* but whether her hand or her lips, I couldn't see," grins the girl.

"Indeed, who is the ardent gallant?" sneers Barnes, indifferently.

The answer that comes strikes the American's nerve centres.

"Count Corregio Cipriano Danella," remarks Miss Chartris, affably. "You know his poor brother, Musso, is dead."

"What, the fellow who gave Marina the letter in the Marseilles depot that made her faint?" The

light of battle springs into Barnes's face. "You put me within ten paces of that gentleman with the scar over his eye, Maudie," he remarks slowly, "and you shall die of bonbons."

Here Miss Chartris shocks his nerve centres again.

"Oh, he's not scarry at all!" cries Maud, indignantly. "That dissipated-looking creature is not Corregio Cipriano Danella. Cip is a corker! Corsican hat and plumes—so romantic—in deep black—so sad—manners like a dancing master—quite actor-like, too. He buttered me all over with compliments till my pig-tails stood on end with joy. While ma was primping after her drive, we played rolly pooly on the green and I told him how a chap who had a kind of family likeness to him had mashed Marina and passed her a *billet doux* that knocked her silly in the Marseilles railroad station. Ah, how Count Corregio laughed in his old school way: 'An amorette is a lady's privilege even in her wedding gown.'

"Then somehow he jollied me along till I got gay and told him how anxious you were to buy the letter from me, and I—I only had sold you the three-quarters of it that I had picked up on the floor of the depot—the part that didn't give anything away."

"Then you have *the other part?*"

Burton's tone is so searching, his manner so

severe that Maud dare not tell him, and falters out a lie: "Of course, I haven't. Didn't I tell you I only picked up what I gave you?"

Suddenly she wails imploringly: "But, my Lordy, you're not going to tell ma. Oh, skinnings, if she hears I let the cat out of the bag on her kiss business!" for Barnes has risen and is striding determinedly back to the house, a definite resolution upon his set face.

BOOK II

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CHAPTER VII

MAUD'S CONFIDENCES

Miss Chartris pursues him along the walk between the citron and the orange trees, asking affrightedly: "Why do you look so terrible?"

For Barnes is meditating sardonically: "If it were only the scar-faced devil, I'd kill him on sight as I would a rattlesnake. That fiend has already condemned himself. But this one who has turned up here, the real Corregio Cipriano Danella, brother of the dead man, what has he done to me that I can at present justly destroy him? Neither Emory nor myself, from the signature on his check, could say he wrote those letters. If he did, the dastard threat against my coming bride would make me send Cip to the devil in very short order. But I must have proof."

A desperate pluck upon his sleeve turns him about. Maud is half sobbing: "Your face is so—so horrible, I—I know you're going to tell ma."

"How old is this Cipriano Danella?" asks Barnes, curtly.

"About thirty-five. Don't tell her what I said about the kiss—ma is so gone on him."

"So you think your mother is *épris* with this gentleman in romantic Corsican mourning?"

"Lots! Don't you see how she has made me *younger*—two more tucks in my skirts and petticoats, put there to-day by my blarsted nursery governess." Maud grinds out the word "nursery" between set teeth. "If I don't say to gentlemen I'm only eleven, that Marston is to give me more arithmetic lessons—and I have another birthday coming soon," she sighs: then mutters savagely: "Hang 'em, will they never let me grow old?"

"Oh, age 'll strike you fast enough, when you don't want it, petite," remarks Burton, grimly, as he rings the bell of the villa and demands to see Lady Chartris.

"You—you are going to tell ma?"

"Certainly not," says the American, in kindly tone; the terror of the repressed girl, who is still governed as a child, is almost pathetic.

A moment later her mother sweeps affably down to him. During Barnes's perusal of Emory's letters and enjoyment of Maud's confidences, Prunella has made a toilette that seems more elaborate than would be called forth by the arrival of relatives. Her plump shoulders and matronly bust spring out from a superb evening gown of more than *décolleté de*

rigueur. In addition, some great Gallic beauty artist has removed the lines from her face—she may now pass for under forty in a salon. This has not been apparent in the sunset gloom, but the house now being illuminated, it is easily appreciated by her astonished visitor.

"She's been every day to Madame Duval, 50 Rue Paradis—you know, 'Beauty without Publicity.' Ain't she gone on Cip," whispers Maud in explanation, as she glides away.

"What, back again so soon?" says the widow, pleasantly, leading Barnes to her parlour.

"Yes," observes that gentleman, "I forgot to mention that the reason you could treat us *en famille* is that to-morrow I am about to wed——"

"Enid!" screams the lady. "Oh, you darling boy!" and gives him a sudden, whole-souled kiss. After a moment she says deprecatingly: "This sudden mating will not permit of a grand wedding." Then, her eyes growing excited at the thought of social success, she exclaims: "Maud in a white tulle made with baby waist, pink sash and pink silk stockings, would make a delightful child maid of honour. Postpone it for a week and I'll give you a ceremony that will electrify all Nice. Of course, the town is growing deserted, but Adelaide Carrington at the De la Mediterranée, Milly Portman of the De Rome and Lilly Vivian at the Hotel des Anglais, are three

charming English girls who will be delightful bridesmaids for Enid. Besides, Edwin could invite the officers of Her Majesty's *Opal*, which is lying off Monte Carlo, and the Earl of Abbington and Lady Sevenoaks from Cannes—both are distant relatives of your betrothed. And you—you could telegraph your sister, Lady Morington, to run down from London. Oh, it shall be the most important wedding this season in the Riviera."

"It is the most important wedding to me," remarks Barnes, solemnly, "but it will be the most private one. Enid and I are only anxious to be wed. I must beg you to say nothing about this to anyone." The gentleman's tone is deferential but imperative. "To-night I shall drive into Nice and see the pastor of the English Church. Here in this parlour, to-morrow evening, he shall say, by the blessing of God, the words that will make my darling mine."

"Oh, of course, if you so desire it, Burton," answers Prunella, affably. "I suppose Enid thinks she can manage some kind of a wedding gown by to-morrow evening."

"Anyway, that's the time," observes Barnes, quietly. All the while he is studying Lady Chartris, wondering if her marvellous change in appearance has attracted Corregio Cipriano Danella, or whether the Corsican has in some subtle way learned this is

the retreat of the pursued, and is here on account of family vengeance.

"There is slight possibility that a man of thirty-five can be attracted by cosmetics," muses the American. Then he suddenly asks: "Has anyone called here for me?"

"Nobody, I believe. The only person I observed in Nice who knew you was la Belle——" Lady Chartris's cheeks glow with the modest blushes of an English widow as she checks herself in mentioning the awful Blackwood.

Barnes blushes also. When a man of the world is about to wed youth and purity, the follies of his wilder youth seem shameful things. So he cuts off this mention of the great American adventuress by saying shortly: "Mr. Emory, my agent, has not been for me yet?"

"Why, no, I haven't heard of Emory since we left Marseilles," remarks his hostess.

"Ask your servants, please. This matter is important."

Lady Chartris goes out and after a few minutes returns and says that she has questioned everyone in the house and they all assert that nobody since their arrival at the villa had called and asked for Mr. Barnes. "But if you don't bring your party on shore," prattles Prunella, "they'll be late for dinner, and—my goodness! I had forgotten—I

have an engagement in Nice this evening, so I'll have to be leaving immediately after."

The additional tint upon the lady's cheeks shows that it is a love tryst.

"All right, I've got to see that minister," replies Barnes, easily, "so, if you'll be so good, you can drive me in to Nice. Now I'll get our party on shore." He lights a cigar and strolls rapidly down to the little landing place between ilex trees and oleanders, the thoughts of his coming nuptials raising his spirits.

"Since the new Danella is here, I'm glad to know it," he thinks. "A discovered danger is better than a hidden one. Who the deuce is that scar-faced scoundrel?" Then the fire in his Havana dies away, he forgets to puff it.

Emory was to be here by the 4th—this very day. It's nearly expired and no signs of the detective, a man that Barnes knows is prompt in his appointments. "What can this mean?"

This is his reflection as he is in the boat being rowed alongside of the *Wildfowl*, for Edwin has had the yacht warped tolerably close to the landing stage, and the little pleasure vessel, looking like a slovenly merchant schooner, is now lying not over a hundred yards away from where the soft waters flap lazily upon the grounds of Lady Chartris's villa.

Barnes climbs hastily on board, takes the lieuten-

ant to the retirement of the stern and rapidly tells him of the appearance of the true Corregio Cipriano Danella. "This complicates matters," he whispers. "The scar-faced scoundrel we could have put out of the way without compunction, but till this new arrival does some overt act I hesitate at sending him to Kingdom Come!"

"So we have been blaming these letters on the real Count Danella, when some other land pirate has been doing the dirty business," mutters Edwin, disgustedly.

"Of that I am not absolutely sure," answers Burton; then he asks eagerly: "Has Marina yet told you what her note contained?"

"Why, I was questioning her on that only a little while ago and she simply begged me to trust her. You see, I'm getting more and more anxious about her. As the time for landing gets nearer my bride grows more pale, more nervous—my Heaven! more despairing," sighs the young Englishman.

"And my sweetheart becomes more resolute, more determined. Bless her pluck, she is singing in the cabin now!" whispers Mr. Barnes.

For, in happy strain, the liquid voice of Miss Anstruther floats up from the companionway in an English ballad.

"And yet," remarks her brother, gloomily, "my bride was as brave as Enid is, before her wedding."

A tone of consternation enters his voice; he suddenly queries: "Can Marina know of some hidden danger of which my sister doesn't dream?"

"Then you're not the man I think you," answers Barnes, almost savagely, "if you, her husband, don't get it out of her. Don't you see, you've *got* to know; that no sentimental reason should stand between you and everything that is in your wife's mind, Edwin?"

"All right, Marina shall tell me to-night," answers the young sailor, determinedly. "But there's one thing we've got to do first, that's to see our girls are mighty safe for the present. I've fixed it, I think, pretty well with Graham. We leave the cook and one man aboard as anchor watch, and the mate takes his Scotch tars ashore and keeps careful lookout all night about the grounds."

"You've told them I'll reward them liberally?" remarks Barnes.

"Oh, it didn't require money. Graham and the rest of the crew have kind of got it into their heads that we are being pursued by some murdering foreign gang and the honest fellows from the land o' cakes are mighty eager to meet the Corsican thugs."

Here Enid stops the interview. "Are we never going on shore to dinner?" asks that young lady, hungrily, but laughingly, as she steps lightly on deck. "I heard your boat, Burton," she adds.

"Please help me down the side ladder. Marina has Edwin's sailor skill to prevent her tumbling into the water. My, isn't he tender to her!" This last is whispered as Mrs. Anstruther, having come on deck, is half carried by her husband down the yacht's side to the cutter.

"Guess I can do the ladder act as well as he," and Burton's clutch upon his coming bride as he places her in the stern sheets of the boat is as fervid as that of the English bridegroom.

As he does this, Marina's bright eyes staring at him in the half light, startle him. Some curious occult meaning is in their liquid, passionate depths.

To destroy the bride's melancholy, Mr. Barnes immediately tells the ladies how Tompson had brought all their trunks with her to Nice; so they'll have lots of nice frocks.

"How lucky!" cries Enid, excitedly. "There's a tulle over white satin, just the thing for my wed——" Bashfulness stops the word; she turns her face from her lover's impassioned eyes, and her delicate fingers play with the water as the boat goes dashing on. But a moment later she claps her hands together and ejaculates, nervously: "Marina, get excited! Think of all your pretty things you'll now have to fascinate Edwin with."

"I had enough to last," whispers the young Corsican lady with a sigh.

"To last till *what?*" Barnes asks himself with a start.

Edwin, who is steering, has paid little attention to this, but this "last till *what?*" lingers in the American's brain. He finds himself repeating it to the rhythm of the oars as the boat drives up to the little landing stage.

To what event does the young Corsican lady refer that will eliminate a bride's wish to look well in her bridegroom's eyes before even the honeymoon is ended?

Miss Chartris suddenly affords a solution to this problem in a way that dismays Barnes. At the splash of the boat's oars, Maud comes rushing down to the landing and cries eagerly: "Bully! Everybody on shore quick! Ma's got to drive into Nice after dinner to meet her new beau."

"Her new beau! How about Von Bülow?" laughs Edwin, as he assists the ladies to the landing stage.

"Oh, Von's on the back shelf!" cries Maud, letting her tongue run away with her. "Count Corregio Cipriano Danella is now first favourite."

At the name, Marina quivers as if under a blow. Then suddenly the nervous dread seems to leave her dark eyes and the courage of devoted love flies into them. She starts from her husband's arm, to which she has been clinging.

"By Heaven, Marina knows this Cipriano Dan-

ella is the real king-pin of this death feud," is Barnes's astute reflection. He notes that the bride's head is held on high; that this delicate creature steps lightly but resolutely in front of her stalwart sailor husband as if to meet and shield him from coming danger. Her impassioned eyes affright the American. "My Lord," he shudders, "this devoted girl means to sacrifice herself in some way for this husband she adores. How? Eternal powers, I must find what that letter said!"

But Enid and Maud, as they step up the path, are now joking and laughing; the latter is saying she's such a good little girl she's to come in to dessert. "Keep your nuts and raisins for me, every one of you," she entreats.

At this, Marina smiles so blithely that Edwin whispers to Barnes: "Getting ashore makes her normal again."

Then after a few words of caution to Graham and his tars, who tie up the cutter and step ashore to patrol the outside of the grounds till morning, Anstruther follows the rest of the party to the house.

A few minutes after, the ladies already dressed for evening on the yacht, have thrown off their wraps and are all seated at the dinner table of Lady Chartris which, influenced by Mr. Barnes's liberal purse, has become a luxurious one.

The attempt at youth in their hostess's appear-

ance seems to strike the party simultaneously. Enid gazes at the marvellous effects of Madame Duval's art upon her ancient subject's face and can scarce restrain a merry snicker.

Marina, despite the conflicting emotions in her heart, smiles almost sadly, and proceeds during the progress of the meal to draw from Lady Chartris information of her new cavalier and how Cipriano Danella came to visit her. "Did his brother's recent death affect him greatly?" asks the young bride, eagerly.

"Oh," remarks Prunella, "when he begged to be presented to me in Marseilles, the Count was very sad, but——"

"Cipriano met you in Marseilles," ejaculates Barnes, his fork stayed in air over his salad.

"Yes, the day after you left, the poor fellow called to ask if I knew the particulars of his dear brother's death. You, having lately come from Corsica, he thought, might tell him. Under the melancholy circumstances, I deemed it advisable to say to him that you would be at my villa in Villefranche soon and would, of course, give him the facts you might know in regard to poor Musso! He was killed by some bandit or other in Corsica, I understand. But after the gallant Cipriano met me here on the des Anglais three days ago, he—he didn't seem able to talk about anyone else but *me*." The widow

blushes slightly, looks eagerly at the clock and flutters: "The only other subject Count Cipriano mentioned was—was *weddings*."

Edwin and Marina look at each other very solemnly.

Barnes plunges his fork disgustedly into his salad and curses his half confidences to Lady Chartris. The retreat he had so carefully arranged for Enid and Marina while he and Edwin should hunt down the demons who threatened their young lives, was now by his hostess's babbling tongue become known to their pursuers.

He glances moodily at his sweetheart. Miss Anstruther's eyes and her cheeks are both aflame. As if to defy the dangers that are gathering about her wedding day, she says in resolute tones: "You know, Lady Chartris, I marry Mr. Barnes to-morrow," and turns the conversation on her coming nuptials, discussing with her hostess the necessary preparations for the ceremony the next evening.

Delighted with the courage and devotion of his betrothed, Mr. Barnes remarks that Lady Chartris has kindly offered him a seat in her carriage to drive into Nice this evening to engage the minister.

With the dessert, Miss Maud enters to give life and vivacity to the feast. She has been put by her governess in evening infant dress, prattles merrily of the approaching nuptials, suggesting that her

youthful ears have heard some of the dinner-table conversation through the curtains that separate the dining-room from the parlour. Once or twice, when her mother's head is turned, obeying a nod surreptitiously given her by Mr. Barnes, she bolts a glass of champagne, that is generally forbidden her.

Inspired by the stimulating beverage, Miss Maud suddenly ejaculates: "Isn't it a pity you're going to be married on the sneak, Barnes? When I get spliced, as you say, Cousin Edwin, I'm going to church with six bridesmaids and a train ten feet long."

"My Heaven, a child of eleven thinking of marriage," laughs Burton, adding, roguishly: "Marrying must run in your family, Lady Chartris."

"It does!" cries the widow, excitedly. Then to correct the slip of her tongue, she queries, sternly: "Maud, you're not drinking champagne?"

"No, mamma," answers the putative child. To Barnes, she whispers: "Not with her eyes on me," giving him a playful pinch under the table.

Soon after the party rises, and Enid, drawing her betrothed into the privacy of the parlour, whispers: "My own, remember one of the Danellas is here. Be careful for my sake." She puts her fair arms entreatingly about his neck.

"I have my pistols," answers Burton, sententiously, and administers a soothing kiss.

Stepping to Edwin, he whispers: "Keep a sharper lookout than ever."

"Yes, it's yardarm to yardarm now," answers the sailor.

Lady Chartris's carriage is announced.

"Help me with my wraps, Cousin Burton," cries the widow, eagerly, and seems anxious to be gone.

As Barnes is cloaking Prunella, Enid entreats, nervously: "You will come back soon?"

"Oh yes, by to-morrow morning," laughs Anstruther, trying to make light of her fears. "Jack's last cruise ashore, you know."

"No ward-room jokes about my coming husband!" commands his sister, indignantly.

"Yes, but I—I can't bring Burton home very early," says Lady Chartris, in embarrassed tone. "You see I—I promised to go to the Casino with—with Count Cipriano Danella," adding eagerly: "Couldn't I invite him to the wedding?"

"Yes, bring him, please—I want to see the gentleman," returns Barnes, quietly, his eyes growing steely.

Anstruther looks astounded and Enid seems amazed, but the most startling effect is produced upon Marina. Her delicate face grows of a deathly pallor, her slight fingers work nervously, but her dark eyes begin to flame.

"Gee," remarks Maud, the champagne making

her reckless, "you needn't look as if you were going to execution, Marina. Cip isn't *your* beau."

"Maud, don't talk that way and go to bed!" commands her mother, severely. Though the widow as she steps into her victoria reflects with delighted horror: "These foreign brides are awful. Here's a two-weeks' one jealous of that fascinating Count Danella, who's now devoted to me."

Barnes immediately follows his hostess and the carriage drives away rapidly, Lady Chartris calling to the driver to hurry.

Miss Anstruther gazes after it till it disappears in the shrubbery leading to the entrance of the grounds. Then with a sigh she languidly remarks that she is tired and will go to bed. Leaving Edwin and Marina in some honeymoon conference in the parlour she steps up to her chamber and gives her maid a few directions about her coming wedding, while the abigail is disrobing her; but checks Tompson, who would be loquacious, directing her to put her in dressing-gown as she has some letters to write.

The maid, however, has scarcely retired when there comes a sharp, sudden rapping on the door.

"What is it?" cries Miss Anstruther, and grasps a pistol Barnes has given her, as they sailed into the Villefranche harbour, with the suggestion: "It may be useful some day."

In answer, Maud's excited voice through the panel makes Miss Anstruther laugh. "Enid, I can't go to sleep till you let me be your maid of honour at the wedding."

"Can it be we're making a bugaboo of this Corsican affair?" half sneers the English girl, as she puts the pistol down, and Maud, without waiting for permission, opens the door and comes dashing in. "I'm not going away until you promise, Enid," chatters the child. "This is the best chance I've ever had of getting into a wedding."

"If it will please you, dear," remarks Enid affably.

"That's bully," cries Maud; "they give bridesmaids presents, don't they?" This last very eagerly.

"You sordid thing," cries Enid in nervous merriment.

"You pretty thing," retorts Maud, placing her eyes upon Miss Anstruther, who, in her dishabille, looks fairy-like. "Crackey, you'll make a corking bride. If I was a man wouldn't I envy Barnes?"

"Don't talk in that way," murmurs the candidate for matrimony, bashfully.

"All right, another subject," laughs Maud.

With this she suddenly breaks out: "Didn't Marina get on a high horse when ma said she was going in to meet Cip Danella? She's jealous of him, I reckon."

"Hush!" commands Enid. "You have the most extraordinary ideas for a child."

"Child? I'm sixteen!" cries Maud, defiantly. Then repressed in one direction, the champagne that is coursing through Miss Chartris's brain breaks out in another. "Anyway," she hints roguishly, "Barnes might find an old sweetheart this evening if he stepped into the Hotel St. Petersburg."

"Who?" The coming bride's voice is excited.

"Oh, a little girl isn't permitted to speak the name of such a lady," replies Maud, innocently, "but it commences with a 'Belle' and it ends with a 'Blackwood.'"

"My Heaven, is *she* here?"

"Gee, and Blackie's in great shape, too. I was on the Promenade des Anglais with Marston yesterday. Not a woman to touch her for beauty. Diamonds to beat Starr & Mortimer's, and that Mr. Ruggles running after her with an open checkbook in his hand, everybody said."

"Then we'll leave her to Mr. Ruggles," says Enid, coldly, though her heart is beating wildly.

"Oh, but she won't stick to Mr. Ruggles. So I thought I'd just give you a hint, so that if she cuts in after you're married you'll know how to fix her. Of course, this evening you are blocked."

"Blocked, this evening?"

"I want to tell you something that happened!"

"Don't dare to."

"But I will, for your sake. A note came to Barnsey from her."

"A note from that infamous creature? Impossible!"

"Impossible? I slipped it into Burton's hand just before he went in to dinner, and he slipped it into his pocket. I saw the address; it was in her handwriting."

"Liar, how do you know La Blackwood's handwriting?" cries the tortured one.

"Blackie's autograph facsimile was published in an advertisement of Lily's Soap, in the London *Gossip* last month. 'I recommend your soap for its unblemished purity,' she wrote. Thunder, how I laughed at that ad. But you want to take this seriously, you do, Enid, and not giggle hysterically, as you are now. Ouch! Oh good Lordy, be careful, you are pinching my arm!"

"Very well, I will," says the young lady, whose face has become that of a marble statue, lighted by two burning, tortured eyes. "Now to bed, you meddler, and not a word of this to anyone on earth, or you know what I know and will tell your mother."

"Jingo, not about——"

"Yes!"

And Maud retires subdued, but she leaves convulsed features, clenched hands and a dizzy brain

behind her. Miss Anstruther sighs: "Oh, if he *dares* to see her!" then murmurs, "No, no, impossisible! He's gone to get the minister for to-morrow —to wed *me*."

Yet several burning tears run down the fair cheeks of the coming bride as she tosses herself into bed and cannot go to sleep.

Unconscious of Maud's unfortunate hints, Mr. Barnes drives into Nice chatting to Lady Chartris, to encounter a danger not from an assassin, but from a woman.

CHAPTER VIII

A NIGHT IN NICE

The drive to Nice is not only a short but pleasant one. Mr. Barnes, with revolvers ready for emergency, seated by Lady Chartris, though chatting alertly, keeps both his eyes and his ears open.

Their route is over the pretty forest road that crosses the little promontory of Mont Boron, driving between detached villas, and in many cases open vegetable gardens and little vineyards, for Villefranche was much more apart from Nice in 1883 than it is at present. Once or twice the American listens intently, he thinks he hears pursuing hoofs. But these blend into the noises of general traffic as they reach and pass through the old town. Crossing the river by the Pont Neuf and turning down the Quai St. Jean, they drive along the Avenue Massena nearly to the sea.

The town looks bright and alert this lovely evening, having nearly recovered from its conflagration of 1881.

Though visitors have for the last month been leaving the great watering place by the Mediterranean, there are still enough sojourners to comfort-

ably fill the public gardens. The band is playing, the night is only pleasantly warm, and Lady Chartris seems in high spirits as Barnes says to her: "You can drop me anywhere now. Only, where shall I meet you?"

"At the Hotel de la Mediterranée. There Count Danella is doubtless waiting for me," replies the hostess. "Call for me at eleven and I'll drive you back."

Barnes alights and, as he glances at the neighbouring Hotel des Anglais, he recollects this had been the scene of his first call upon Enid when Lady Chartris had invited him to accompany her and her charge to Monte Carlo. He can scarce believe it is only a month ago since he had looked in her face. His step grows light with happiness. To-morrow Enid will be his, thinks the young man as he passes Russian countesses, an Austrian arch-duchess and several visiting English, American and French ladies and gentlemen who in light summer costumes are chatting pleasantly near the bandstand of the public gardens.

The brilliant music of its orchestra, which is playing a polka, catches his ear. The gay dresses of the fashionable loiterers from the four quarters of the world and their frivolous gaiety seem to proclaim that mediæval assassination is far apart from the modern Nineteenth Century.

Suddenly somebody mentions the name of the fascinating American adventuress, a Parisian countess is saying to a lady friend: "That La Blackwood crushes us with her toilettes. Did you ever see such a robe as the wretch sported to-day?"

"By Jove, that reminds me. I wonder what Sally has to say to me?" thinks Burton, and pulls out an almost forgotten note from his pocket.

A big arc light, which was the great illuminating medium of that epoch, permits him to read:

"MON CHER BARNES:

"Don't hold your horses, but come to me at the St. Petersburg like a shot. I want to warn you of a very imminent danger. I have just discovered your location here by accident. Don't think I hate you, though I ought to.

"Yours sincerely,

"SALLY SPOTTS."

"Will that woman never let me alone?" thinks the American, and pushes the note back in his pocket. "I'll forget Sally Spotts forever by going and seeing the minister."

He turns up the Avenue de La Gare, whistling softly. Going to see the minister produces a peculiar and curious feeling. Man of the world as he is, he grows bashful about it. A few minutes' walk and he is at the Avenue Notre Dame. But at the entrance to the residence of the divine, a suspicion enters his mind that he is being followed.

He makes his interview with the minister of the

Church of England a very short one, and coming rapidly out of the house, his quick eyes perceive two men on the opposite side of the street. These turn casually toward the traffic of the busy avenue from the railroad station and are lost in the crowd from an arriving train. One of them is on horseback. Can it be that this fellow has followed him from Lady Chartris's villa?

Now that his footsteps are being dogged, he thinks he had better see Perrier, the French detective recommended by the Pinkerton man. Therefore, keeping his eyes about him sharp at any dark corners of the streets, he walks to the Rue Palermo, and rings the bell at the house mentioned in Emory's letter.

Here an old woman concierge informs him that Monsieur Perrier's room is number four on the second floor. She takes up his card and astonishes him by returning almost immediately and saying that Monsieur Perrier is out.

"Nonsense, I heard somebody speak to you. My business is of such importance that I must see him," and Barnes, pushing his way to number four on the second floor, is confronted at the door of this apartment by a man of very brisk manner, sharp, penetrating eyes and a nose whose peculiar aquiline formation impresses itself on Barnes's memory.

"In order to avoid any mistake," whispers the

American, "I simply mention to you the word 'Vendetta.'"

"And I simply reply Marseilles,'" answers the man, "but I don't wish to have anything to do with the affair."

"You are Monsieur Perrier?"

"Yes, of course; you know by my returning the word of recognition to you," remarks the Frenchman, about to close his door, politely, but firmly.

But Barnes presses into the room with him and says: "I must have a reason for your declining to aid me. This matter is too important for you not to listen to me."

"I have been informed," answers Perrier, "by my poor friend Emory's letters of this peculiar and most unfortunate affair, but I do not wish to engage in it."

"Why not?" asks Barnes, shortly. "Don't you think I have money to pay for it?"

"Of course, I know Monsieur is rich," answers the Frenchman, deprecatingly. "But my life is my only asset. I have a wife and children. I saw one vendetta in Corsica a few years ago, and I don't want to get into another cat fight where cats are armed with stilettos. I decline to have anything to do with it except to say to you that the whole commune of Bocognano, Corsica, think you and the English Lieutenant Anstruther came there not only to wed

Mademoiselle Paoli to her brother's murderer, but incidentally produced the death of Count Musso Danella and old Tomasso Monaldi. Your enemies already know your location at Villefranche, Bernardo Saliceti has come from Corsica hoping to win the election in his island by vengeance upon you. He and Enrico Danella, the dead Musso's nephew, are in Nice."

"Has Enrico a scar upon his forehead over his left eye?" asks Barnes, eagerly.

"He has."

"Then I've the name of the scar-faced gentleman, thank you," remarks Burton. "Now it is necessary you come into this affair, Perrier. You've got to aid not only me, but two women."

The answer that comes causes Barnes to look aghast.

"I dare not," answers Perrier, shortly. "The fate of my poor friend Emory is too horrible."

"Fate! What fate?"

"Why, he was to be here two days ago, according to his letters to me, to arrange for guarding your villa. He is not here even to-day. His last note from St. Tropez indicated he was close upon the track of those who have sworn this blood feud against you—*and all who aid you.* That letter was written four days ago and—what has become of Emory?"

"How can I tell?" mutters the American, gloomily.

"But I can," answers the private detective. "Madame Blackwood, for whom I have executed some little commissions, called on me two days ago excitedly. 'Perrier,' she said, in her American abruptness, 'I want you to bring to justice some villains who murdered a Yankee detective named Emory, the other day near St. Tropez.' 'You saw him killed?' I asked. 'No, but I've got evidence —a few words from—' she checked herself; but added, 'I don't dare to tell Mr. Ruggles of this; he's so impulsive he'd spend his money and his blood, too, to bring a murderer of one of his countrymen to justice. So you just go on and get the evidence against these fellows and trot them to the guillotine.' But the fate of Emory warned me, I determined to give up the whole affair," adds Perrier.

"Thank you again," sneers Barnes, and coming out the American laughs to himself: "This detective should catch flies on honey, not men with arms in their hands. I'll try what the public officers of the French Government can do next time."

But the mention of Madame Blackwood reminds him of her letter. "By George, Sally's note hinted at grave danger to me. It must be this Emory business!" and without more ado Mr. Barnes, hur-

riedly keeping his eyes alert for sudden daggers, makes his way to the promenade by the sea and shortly after enters the luxurious Hotel St. Petersburg.

It is ten in the evening. He is about to send up his card to Madame Blackwood and request an interview when that siren enters magnificent in a summer toilette of satins and laces and a hat to match, the same constructed at great cost by Monsieur Worth, of Paris. As she comes in by the ladies' entrance, the Kansas cattle king, who attends her, chances to glance into the office and calls out: "Whew, Barnes, that was a right lucky address you gave me in Paris five weeks ago," and, taking him aside, whispers, "I caught the lady. The goods came high, but they're worth the money. Step up and have supper with us."

This invitation Barnes finds it impossible to politely decline, as Sally Blackwood has already put her beautiful eyes upon him and said: "So glad you're here. You mustn't refuse. We saw so little of you in Monte Carlo." There is a slight sneer upon her face, which shows the lady hasn't forgotten the peculiar interview with Barnes when he had prevented the arrogant adventuress from kissing Enid.

But the lady laughs rather good-naturedly as

the cattle king continues: "You see, Sally was quite rheumaticky up at Monte Carlo. The air didn't agree with her, so we couldn't remain."

A moment later Barnes finds himself ushered into La Blackwood's private parlour, where a supper after the manner of Lucullus is shortly served to them, the wines being of the very finest vintages and the cigars "the best in France," as Ruggles remarks.

Several times Burton is about to hint at the purport of her note, but the expressive eyes of the adventuress warn him to hold his tongue. Coffee, however, is no sooner served than the fascinating creature says languidly, but commandingly: "Now, Dan, supposing you run downstairs and have your smoke there. I want to talk with Mr. Barnes of New York—something I don't want you to hear. That needn't make you jealous—it's about my parents in Ohio."

"All right, Duckie. Yours to command always," returns the cattle king, who, as he lights his big perfecto and saunters to the smoking-room of the hotel, grins to himself: "Gee whiz, Sally can twist me round her finger a good deal easier than Mirandie." Mirandie is the absent Mrs. Ruggles in London.

The minute the cattle king disappears the lady's manner changes. She cries airily: "Light a cigar-

ette for me, old boy"; then asks half playfully, half menacingly: "Guess what made me write to you?"

"Hate," mutters Barnes, between puffs of his cigarette.

"No, though I ought to hate you. Oh, that was cruel in you, that threat to tell my mother and my father."

"But you knew if you kept your contract, I'd keep your secret," answers Barnes.

"Yes! Still it wasn't love, either," laughs the lady. "I've given up the tender passion; it's too tiresome," she sighs, as she languidly extends upon an armchair a figure that had made the fortune of the artist who painted her portrait for the Paris Salon. "I let other people love me, like Dan down there. What I want to see you about——" La Blackwood's eyes become intense and her voice falls to a whisper—"*is to save your life*—if I can. Do you know that half of a commune in Corsica want your blood?"

"I've guessed it in the last few days," observes Barnes grimly.

"Are you acquainted with a certain Count Cipriano Danella?"

"Never have seen him."

"No, but you've heard of him?"

"Oh, yes, he's a brother of the Danella who was killed in Corsica."

"Yes. Now, this gentleman, who is a very good man and very tender-hearted, obtained an introduction to me about three days ago on the des Anglais. From some words of a Lady Chartris, a cousin of yours, he has learned that you are to marry very shortly the pretty girl whose lips I threatened to kiss at Monte Carlo. Well, this Cipriano Danella, who looks quite romantic in his Corsican mourning, while making love to me till Dan got jealous," she laughs slightly, "hinted to me that it would be very unfortunate for Miss Anstruther should she become Mrs. Barnes of New York; that, as your wife, she would be drawn into this blood feud that has been declared against you. 'Now,' suggested Count Cipriano, 'you are the lady best fitted by past friendship and present charm, to prevent this danger to the pretty English girl, by destroying the wedding.'"

"You brought me here for this?" says Burton, his eyes growing angry.

"Wait! Listen! I have prevented a good many weddings in my life," sighs the siren, almost remorsefully, "but I don't want to prevent yours, Barnes. As an American, my desire is to protect you from death. I appeared to accede to Cipriano's request to fascinate you again. I wonder if I could do it?" She looks at him roguishly and laughs through her white teeth. "Don't be frightened of

me. So I pumped the romantic Corsican, who made half love to me while he tried to persuade me. You know I've got rather a fascinating way with me of causing gentlemen's tongues to be careless, and I found out that not only was the commune of Boco—Bocognano or something of that kind—anxious for your blood, but that several gentlemen from that neighbourhood were here in order to obtain it, and to make their task easy, they had done up in some way or other a detective you had employed to shadow them, a Yankee named Emory, I believe. I remember him, a Pinkerton man who did some work for me about a lost diamond stolen by a chambermaid two or three years ago at Cannes. Therefore, I said to myself: 'I'll take care if possible to inform Mr. Barnes of the dangers that surround him, and if he is the man I think him, he is about as well able to protect himself and his coming bride as anyone I know.' Keep up the pistol practice, Burton; it may be useful. Have another cigarette?"

"Hold up a moment. I want to ask you a question," interrupts Barnes. "What makes you think these devils have done up poor Emory?"

"Well, a careless expression of Count Danella—only this: 'He won't bother them again,' something of that kind from Cipriano."

"'Bother *them* again?' Bother *him* again, you mean."

"Oh, no, all the Count's conversation with me has been that of a rank outsider trying to prevent the beautiful English girl's happiness, perhaps life, being destroyed by mating you."

"He shall find how much I'll give him my thanks," mutters Barnes. "But—but I must be going. I'm deeply grateful to you." Burton rises. "Mr. Ruggles——"

"Don't be afraid. Dan won't be jealous even if we talk a little longer. Aren't you going to give me a kiss for my information—just one, a good-by one?"

The lovely eyes of Sally Blackwood fill with tears.

"No," answers the man of the world, "not that I don't think your lips are tempting enough, but when I became engaged to Miss Anstruther I said, 'I'll never do anything to make my fiancée unhappy.' Though Enid's a girl of broad mind, I don't think she would quite like it."

"Ah, always a preux chevalier. Very well, we'll only shake hands." She extends to him her beautifully formed white fingers dazzling with rings. "Good-by, I hope you'll be happy on your wedding trip, but don't let love make you careless, mon Bayard."

Barnes takes her hint. His pistol is ready as he throws open the door of her apartment and passes cautiously out; so all the way down the stairs of the

hotel he is careful as to corners, and out on the street, well peopled as is the Des Anglais, the American has a wary eye about him. Lady Chartris has doubtless told Cipriano Danella of his visit to Nice and that he returns with her to her villa this evening. He therefore breaks his appointment with Prunella and taking a hired carriage watches till the lady, tired of waiting, drives angrily home, then jogs along a few hundred yards behind her, ready for any emergency. But nothing of a threatening nature is seen.

As the vehicle enters the grounds of the villa, the sight of a Scotch tar on the lookout gives the coming bridegroom confidence in the sailor's watch. Edwin is waiting to let him in. The lieutenant says, sleepily: "I was growing anxious about you, after I admitted Cousin Prunella and she angrily stated she would never wait for you again. Driving home, she had a big fright, two men looked into her carriage and went away muttering in Italian, she said."

But this looking over the shoulder business makes Mr. Barnes resolve to bring the affair to a climax as quickly as possible.

As he wakes up in the morning, notwithstanding the thought that it is his wedding day is dominant in his mind, he reflects over the matter. What has this Cipriano Danella done except to arouse his suspicions? "Even the Count's conversation with

la Belle Blackwood didn't disclose that he meditated any attack upon me or my bride," he reflects, moodily, "only that Cipriano wished to prevent an innocent young girl being drawn into this frightful feud. Hang it, I can't shoot the cuss on suspicion —and yet!" The American closes his jaw with a snap and goes down to breakfast, to meet as charming a bride as the sun has shone upon.

CHAPTER IX

THE COMING OF DANELLA

At the morning meal Barnes finds the rest of the party growing excited over the approaching ceremony, and Maud telling them about her maid-of-honour dress. "You'll have to lend me a pair of silk stockings, Enid," cries the putative infant. "I don't think I have any bang up enough for the ceremony. They should be corkers. Mine show, yours don't."

This oration is interrupted by Lady Chartris saying, insinuatingly: "Cousin Burton, you must have had a pretty long chat with the minister. I waited for you last evening till half-past eleven."

A sly giggle from Maud sets Enid's blue eyes ablaze, though there's a whimper on her sweet lips.

"Yes, lots of details," replies Barnes, casually. "Did you have a pleasant outing with Cip, Cousin Prunella?"

"Of course I did, with such a cavalier."

"You invited Count Danella to my wedding?" asks the American, abruptly.

"Of course I did," cries the widow, rapturously. "He accepted immediately; said he was very anxious to meet you."

"The pleasure will be mutual," observes Burton, grimly.

Enid and her brother look at each other solemnly, but Marina's face, when she learns that Cipriano Danella has accepted the invitation to the nuptials, becomes so serious that Barnes, after breakfast, takes her husband aside and says: "Have you found out about that accursed letter?"

"No, she begged me not to ask her. She sobbed it was for my happiness that I didn't know. You'll soon discover, Barnes," remarks Edwin moodily, "that you cannot do much with a bride when she turns on the hose and washes the matrimonial decks."

This reminds Burton that he had better not start his married life with a secret, and getting Enid alone with him, which isn't very difficult, he briefly but pointedly tells his fiancée of his interview with la Belle Blackwood.

"Oh, I'm so glad you told me—so glad she's not all bad!" exclaims the girl, rewarding him with so rapturous a kiss that he is delighted he refused Sally's farewell salute. "I—I learned from Maud that you had received a letter from her," she adds, hesitatingly.

"You didn't doubt me?" This issues in stern reproach from the lips of the American.

"Oh, no, but—but no secrets from me, please,"

she entreats. "There's no real love without a little jealousy"; then shudders: "And so those villains killed poor Emory?"

"I'm afraid so," answers her lover, and his tone grows very solemn. "You see how remorselessly, how craftily we are pursued, that the haven of safety I had planned for you, dear one, when I left you to put those devils forever out of the way, is now known to them. You remember the awful threat against any woman who weds me. You've—you've no wish to delay our marriage?" His eyes are very eager.

Her eyes answer his with equal passion. "No, on the contrary," answers the resolute English girl, "I am resolved more than ever. The petty threats of your enemies shall not rob me of you!" Her kisses stay any further remonstrances.

"Then may God never forgive me if I don't save you from all harm," mutters the coming husband. A moment after he whispers: "Yet we must take all precautions. Just try and see if you cannot do better than your brother."

"How?" asks Enid, eagerly.

"The knowledge of the contents of that letter to Marina may be vital, not only for the happiness of her husband and herself, but perhaps to the safety of all of us. Take her out under the oleanders, sit by her and see if you cannot in some woman's way get the information of what it contained."

About an hour after this, Enid returns and remarks disappointedly: "Not a word from Marina except that it was something entirely between her and her husband; that we would discover some day. But I must leave you, Burton; I have lots to do —an impromptu wedding gown." Then she blushingly asks: "Where are you going to take me after marriage?"

This is a proposition upon which Barnes has been racking his brain. He says, meditatively: "Supposing you and I go out on the yacht?"

"What, alone together? Delightful, romantic!"

"Not entirely. I shall take Graham and three seamen, to sail the schooner."

"And my brother and Marina?" asks Enid, anxiously.

"Oh, I have faith enough in your brother to think that with the rest of the Scotch sailor laddies he can keep this house safe against intrusion till we come back. We'll only be away two or three days."

"Two or three days of happiness," whispers the girl, radiantly, and runs away to prepare for her coming nuptials.

Barnes's own preparations occupy him most of the time till the ceremony, though he contrives to discuss his yatching plans with Edwin.

"All right," answers the sailor, "Graham can

take care of the schooner as well as I. You leave me the balance of the jackies and I'll guarantee everything's all a-taut here when you come into port. I shall take no cruises into Nice. I have enough here to make me happy."

"If Emory should by any chance turn up," remarks Barnes, "keep him with you to help you."

So the day passes. The American has already arranged the matter with Graham and directed that after the nuptials the mate shall go on board the *Wildfowl* and sail her for his wedding cruise.

They are interrupted by the French cook, who has come on shore in the dingy bearing a magnificent wedding cake that he has manufactured in the schooner's galley. "My offering to your bride," remarks the culinary artist. "This will be the crowning glory of your *noces*, Monsieur Barnes. I am to cook for you on your wedding cruise. I must walk into Villefranche to get supplies."

The American is minded to call him back and caution the little fellow to have a quiet tongue, but Maud breaks in upon him in all the glories of her child maid-of-honour frock, crying: "The notary is here and the minister has arrived."

Soon after the party assembles in the parlour, which has been decked with the flowers of Southern France, and Miss Anstruther comes down to them looking in her fresh beauty, with her modest blue

eyes filled with love, very bridelike. She is in an exquisite summer yachting costume, all lace and sheer muslin, through which her fair arms and shoulders gleam like chiselled ivory. A hat of white plumes and ribbons graces her golden hair.

"I didn't put on an evening gown," she whispers, "so I'm ready to go on board, Burton, immediately after the ceremony."

"My Heavens, no bridal veil," flutters Lady Chartris; then she cries in a tone of dismay: "And Count Cipriano is late."

But without waiting for him, the English divine having made the necessary official arrangements as prescribed by the French law, the civil contract is hastily signed before the notary, Edwin acting as Enid's guardian and giving his formal consent.

"Oh, goodness gracious, where can Count Danella be?" ejaculates the hostess again.

But the minister is awaiting them.

Then what is to Miss Anstruther her real wedding begins, the sacrament of the English Church. She standing before the divine, giving her assent modestly but very firmly, Barnes making the responses ardently and determinedly, and thinking even as he puts the ring upon his bride's finger: "It is a kind of curious feeling, getting married with a revolver in your hip pocket ready for business."

A moment later the usual congratulations and

kisses have been given, the party are about to turn to the dining-room, where the wedding supper is spread, there to drink the bride's health before she flits away.

But their steps are stayed by the sound of prancing steeds announcing the coming of the belated yet only invited guest. "Oh, at last! But you are late," cries Prunella, ecstatically, as she runs into the hall. "Just time, Count Cipriano, to toast the bride."

"Yes, an unfortunate accident to my horses," enters to them in a soft, Southern voice from the hallway, where Prunella is interviewing the cavalier she has been waiting for so eagerly.

As this takes place, Edwin whispers: "I'll keep my eye on the beggar."

"And I'll talk to the gentleman as soon as I can get a chance, and if he doesn't give me a clean bill of health——"

The rest of Barnes's speech is interrupted by the entry of the object of their suspicions. Count Cipriano greets the company with extreme politeness but almost nonchalantly, only as he is introduced to Mr. Barnes a curious, wistful, eager flash is emitted from his dark eyes; though his voice is very suave, as he remarks: "I've often heard my poor, dead brother speak of you, monsieur."

Upon the ceremony Marina had looked with a

very pale face, but now two hectic spots flame in either cheek as she returns the salute of Danella, who murmurs: "'Tis years since I saw you—the little girl poor Musso loved. You have grown into a beautiful woman—you who were my dead brother's ward."

Then, the American studying him closely, sees Cipriano's eyes light up with the peculiar flame that in the past illuminated his brother's orbs as he looked upon the loveliness of Marina Paoli. This, perchance, is not to be wondered at; Madame Anstruther, in a two weeks' honeymoon, has added to her girlhood graces the supreme beauty of ecstatic passion, which etherealises her exquisite features, though these have now a nervous vivacity of movement produced by the latent terror for the safety of the husband she adores.

But soon after, as the champagne sparkles, the count toasts the bride very gallantly, remarking on her youthful English beauty. "Signore Barnes should be a happy man," he whispers to her, and goes on chatting so unaffectedly and pleasantly that Enid, who had looked upon his entrance as if he were Mephisto himself, begins to think this pleasant-voiced but vivacious-mannered gentleman is not so dangerous as she suspected.

Dressed in the deep mourning of Southern France, the high Corsican hat he still carries in his hand

lends picturesqueness to Cipriano's costume. A marked family likeness immediately informs Barnes that though nearly ten years younger, this is certainly the half brother of the passed-away Musso Danella. The eyes have the same subtle flame in them and the same intense passions, only more vivid, if possible.

Notwithstanding his sombre garb, soon the gentleman is laughing with Lady Chartris; Maud driving her mother distracted by crying: "I'm only eleven, but I'm as tall as the bride, ain't I, mamma, dear?" and standing up back to back with Enid, making a great juvenile display of baby waist and pink silken stockings.

"It's her high-heeled slippers," cries her mother, angrily. "The deceitful child is standing on tip-toe!"

"*Ma foi*, la petite is anxious to be married herself," smiles Cipriano.

"Ain't I?" cries Maud, merrily. "Ask mamma for me, Count."

"Oh, mercy, the champagne has gone to the minx's head," gasps Lady Chartris, savagely. But Corregio has again devoted his attention to Marina. As well he may; her dark, liquid eyes carrying in their depths the passion of the South, yet always seeming to ask this man a pathetic question—one his orbs refuse to answer, though several times there

is so amorous a gleam in them that the young English husband would like to take their owner by the throat.

"Dash it," thinks Burton, "if the fervid passion of his dead brother for Marina is bequeathed to Cipriano that would add a weirdness to this affair to beat the band."

At first opportunity, while the ladies are gathered about Enid talking to her of her yachting cruise, Barnes says to Danella: "A few words in private with you, please, Count."

"Certainly, I was about to request that myself," remarks Cipriano.

"Perhaps the garden would be more secluded," and the American, ready for action, keeping his eye upon his visitor, politely opens the door and bows him out into the grounds.

As he watches the Corsican in the dim light of the descending evening, Barnes notices he is a flashing eyed, actively built man of not more than thirty-five.

"You wish the interview to be a private one, so do I." His visitor walks well into the shade of the orange and citron trees, passing to where a rift in the foliage permits a view of the boat landing, which in the coming night is now hardly discernible. Here he pauses carelessly, his brilliant orbs occasionally directed toward the water. A moment

later he observes quietly: "Your wedding made me sad, Signore."

"So much so you tried to stop it," rejoins Barnes, drily, striving to keep the anger from his tones.

"Ah, Madame Blackwood has told you our conversation." The Corsican laughs slightly. "I confess I should have done even more to prevent or postpone your nuptials had I seen your bride before and known her extreme youth, beauty and innocence."

The American is about to interrupt him, but Cipriano continues, a strain of sadness in his voice: "Therefore I am very sorry that I didn't arrive before your nuptials. You were the companion of my dead brother, you went mufloon shooting with him several times in Corsica. As such I wished in friendship to warn you not to make any woman your bride; at all events, not till an unhappy suspicion had been settled forever. Some of the natives of Bocognano, who loved my brother, believe that his death was in some way attributable to you, not personally, perhaps——" he notices Barnes's gesture of dissent, "but it would please me if you would give me the particulars as you understand them of the murder of my brother."

"Certainly, all the particulars," replies Burton, anxious to make this man understand the true facts of his brother's death, and thinking perhaps he can

convince Corregio that Musso Danella's assassination came from his own vindictive love of revenge. Therefore, concisely yet rapidly and logically, Mr. Barnes relates the details of Musso Danella's being stabbed by the old Corsican Tomasso Monaldi in mistake for Edwin Anstruther in Marina's bridal chamber nearly two weeks before.

"Yes, but our people believe that you, Americano——" if there is a vindictive ring in Cipriano's voice it is repressed—"in some way aided it."

"I beg your pardon. Your brother was dead almost as I dismounted from my horse at the house," sharply returns the American.

"Yes, but the natives of Bocagnano declare it was by your arts—by your telegram—*Madre di Dio*," wails the Corsican, "that I and they have been bereft.

"They say," cries the Corsican, trying to stifle an almost uncontrollable grief, "that poor Musso was done to death by the arts of foreigners, who came to the island for a nuptial fête but bringing blood with them. They say this naval officer in that house there pretends he didn't slay Antonio, the brother of Marina, because he fears Marina's vow of the vendetta, and that she, my brother's ward, gave poor Musso to his assassin to save her husband from a vengeance all Corsicans think righteous. I am only repeating to you that this

is what the people of Bocognano think," he says, controlling himself. "I am too modern to believe in these old-time feuds of the vendetta, but I am sorry you married that young English girl, whose fate will perhaps be now that of your own. For Bocognano believes you entered it with bridal flowers and left death behind you—you and this naval officer. They have sworn the vendetta against you, Monsieur Barnes, also against Marina Paoli, who has forgotten, in this naval lieutenant's arms, to avenge her brother. As the woman my poor dead brother brought up from childhood, I feel Marina should have at least my protection. Therefore I tell you what my friends in Corsica say, that you and she may have warning."

"And you can tell your friends in Corsica," answers the American, "that if they bother me, or my bride or any of us, I shall plant them with no more compunction than a Western gun man would."

"*Diable,* I have heard of your wonderful precision with the pistol from my dead brother many times," remarks Cipriano, with almost a shudder. "I am told it was your devilish knowledge of that weapon that taught the Englishman how to shoot to kill Antonio, in that duel a year ago on the beach at Ajaccio—which began this unending line of blood." Then his eyes catching a gleam of a light from the distant landing stage, he pauses with a

little start of triumph and adds: "But I have said all possible to warn you, Signore Americano. The rest is not my affair, though I would like to voice a few words to Madame Paoli, who was my brother's ward."

"I do not think her husband will let you," answers Burton. "At all events, he won't let you wrack her nerves by mentioning the awful tragedy."

So the two together return to the house. In the darkness Barnes has his weapon always ready, some flashes of a Corsican fury, that have broken through Cipriano's grief, making the American very suspicious of him; though Burton, disgruntled, cogitates: "Hang it, I can't plant this suave fellow on mere suspicion."

Then reënter the supper room where Lady Chartris takes possession of Cipriano, notwithstanding his eyes follow every movement of the beautiful Marina.

A moment later Barnes asks Lady Chartris ardently where his bride is.

"Oh, she's gone up to her chamber to primp for going away," cries Maud, "and you haven't given me any bridesmaid's present, either." This last is emphasised by a very sullen pout.

"Oh, that will arrive after I return from my honeymoon cruise," returns the American, lightly, and runs up the stairs to the chamber lately occu-

pied by Miss Anstruther, but finding only Tompson in it, he asks: "Where's your mistress?"

"Oh, Miss Enid—I beg your pardon humbly—Mrs. Barnes has gone on board the yacht, sir. You sent for her."

"*I* sent for her! What do you mean?"

"Yes, sir; a man coming up from the landing told me to tell my mistress you were waiting on board for her."

"That's very curious. Graham and his crew are not even on board the yacht."

Barnes dashes downstair, calls the mate to him and asks: "Has any boat come off from the yacht?"

"No, sir."

"Very well; run down to the landing stage with me."

"What's the matter?"

"Why, there's something wrong, I think," whispers Barnes, not breaking his rapid pace. "Tompson has said that I sent for Enid to come to me on board the yacht."

They are already at the landing stage, but in the darkness they cannot see even the hundred yards to the vessel.

"Her lights are not there!" cries the mate; they spring into a boat and row to where the yacht was moored, but find she has disappeared in the darkness.

"By Heaven, somebody's gone away with the yacht!" gasps Graham.

"And with it on board my bride!" moans Barnes, the muscles of his face knotted like whipcord. Almost the next second he said more calmly: "Still it may be possible she's in the house or grounds."

They row hastily back to the landing stage. At the shore Barnes says abruptly: "They have gone away by water; we must follow by water. Graham, get across the harbour and charter some smart craft that can chase the yacht."

The mate, whose face is sorrowful, for all on board the *Seagull* loved the high-spirited young English girl, says quietly: "I understand," and lights a boat's lantern, as the night is very dark.

As the match gives out its glow, Barnes utters a short, sharp exclamation and seizes a small piece of paper tacked on the wooden balustrade of the landing place.

"Your light!" he commands; then mutters: "By the Lord, their message!" for he reads by the flickering flame in foreign script:

"AMERICANO,

"IF YOU WOULD RESCUE YOUR BRIDE, COME TO CORSICA!"

CHAPTER X

THE MISSING FRAGMENT OF THE LETTER

DESPITE his strong nerves, this absolute confirmation of his worst fears as to the woman he adores for a moment benumbs and dazes Barnes; but after one gasping spasm of misery, he directs hoarsely: "Quick, some vessel to pursue these fiends!"

As Graham departs on his errand, the bereft bridegroom, whose face has grown devilish, mutters: "By Heaven, there's a gentleman in that house up there I must see first!" and darts up the path to Lady Chartris's villa, reflecting: "Her fate I must not think of! That would unman me. My mind must be clear to save my darling."

As he reaches the door of the supper room, Lady Chartris's voice is saying in languid sentimentality: "Dear Count Cipriano, abate your interest in your late brother's ward and have another glass of wine to again toast the bride."

At this, Maud laughs: "Hurrah for Mrs. Barnes of New York! Drink her down!" And the clink of champagne glasses seems to the bereft like a funeral knell to his wedding.

But the bridegroom's awful face as he enters stops revelry. Maud gasps: "Holy poker!" and stands

affrighted, her finger poked in her mouth. Marina with a little shriek rises from a sofa on which she has been seated beside Cipriano Danella, and Edwin, springing up, ejaculates: "By hurricanes, what's happened?"

In all his fears and all his agony, into the vengeful husband's mind as he looks upon the party, one mighty consideration springs, that saves Danella's life: "*By Heaven, this man's remaining here indicates his innocence.* If Cipriano had aught to do with the abduction of my wife, he'd scarcely dare to stand unconcerned here before me." For the Count's gaze is carelessly not turned to him, but lingers admiringly upon Marina, who, adorned by the white, clinging gown she has donned for Enid's nuptial fête, is dazzling in girlish grace as well as superb in woman's beauty.

The easy bearing of Danella continues as Barnes briefly tells his tale, though once or twice he raises his thin Italian eyebrows and rolls his dark orbs in sympathy.

"God's mercy, my sister!" shudders Edwin; but Marina, after one quick, sharp sigh, closes her lips sharply and listens eagerly.

"*Dio mio,* it is as I feared!" exclaims the Count sorrowfully. "They have seized your lovely bride."

"Oh murder, if they're drowning poor Enid now!" cries Maud, with a childish morbidness.

This uncanny suggestion drives Barnes frantic. "If they have harmed her——" The contorted features and the steely eyes of the American indicate his vengeance.

"Oh, I do not imagine any injury will come immediately to the young lady. Lately, in the vendetta, women who do not bring about the tragedy are spared," remarks Cipriano quite sympathetically, though his glance rests malevolently upon Marina till her passionate beauty seems to soften his austerity. "But in Bocognano I imagine they wish a visit from you, Mr. Barnes, to rescue your bride," he continues drily. "You see, in Corsica, a native jury would look much more leniently than a Continental one upon the death of the vendetta. That's only my surmise, but I am quite confident it's the correct one."

The American's face, which despite Anglo-Saxon self-control is that of a demon, becomes calmer; he says almost affably: "Thank you, Count. You have told me just what I wanted to know—the location of my loved one!" Then his voice becomes strident; he remarks grimly: "Your friends want a visit from me in Corsica—they shall have one!" To this he adds eagerly: "Danella, come over with me to the island."

"*Santo Gennaro*, will not I!" cries Cipriano ecstatically.

"For Heaven's sake, don't venture! Think of me!" shrieks Lady Chartris, feebly but frantically.

"Gee, ma is fainting for you," giggles Maud frightenedly, as Cipriano alertly catches Lady Chartris in his arms.

A kind of sardonic grin is on the Count's face as he gazes at the half swooning Prunella, but his glance reaching the *svelte* loveliness of Marina as she is clinging to her husband's arm, he remarks philosophically: "*Mon cher Monsieur Barnes*, though I would willingly aid you, it would not be wise to go with you to Corsica. Should ill befall you in that island, you might blame me, of whom you have already had, I am sorry to say, suspicion. As I said before, my poor brother is dead, I meddle in this affair no more. I remain to soothe the Lady Chartris in Nice."

"Thank God!" ejaculates Prunella, sentimentally seizing Danella's hand.

"Yes, I will stay," remarks the Count, heroically.

Suddenly Marina startles them all. She says dominantly: "No one should go to Corsica but me. In the home of my fathers and my kindred—they will believe me when I tell them there is no cause for a vendetta against my friends. I can save your bride, dear Burton, and bring her back to you. My words will have weight with all in Bocognano."

"*Maledictione*, it would be most unwise!" dissents

Danella shudderingly. "Have they not declared the vendetta even against you, Marina? Does not Bernardo Saliceti swear that you, by your arts, produced the death of the father of the girl, Etheria, he is about to marry, old Tomasso Monaldi's daughter?"

"Monstrous!" cries the girl mournfully. "Who dares to accuse me of the death of poor faithful Tomasso, my foster father who worshipped me—and whom I adored?" Tears make her dark eyes tender; but she continues enthusiastically: "Pah, they love me—they will not believe! My people even worship the name of the Paolis. I have no fear of my own kindred, my own blood! Accuse me of the killing of the dear old man who led my childhood steps along the crags of Del Oro and the chestnut groves of Bocagnano! I'll meet Saliceti and prove to the whole commune that he lies." Her eyes are now those of a Corsican.

"And by Heaven, I'll go with you to save my sister!" cries Edwin.

"Ah, that is right—go to save your sister," answers Danella excitedly. "But Madame Anstruther should remain here with Lady Chartris. Only men should go. 'Tis a man's duty, Lieutenant."

"Pish, while we talk I should be acting! No one but me must go!" remarks Barnes shortly. "They hate you, Anstruther, for being English, as they do

your wife. They won't believe that another English officer and not you killed Antonio in that duel. Besides, it is my mission to save my bride, as it is your mission to protect and care for the dear wife in your arms. Don't fear, I will bring Enid back or—or you won't see me again!" This last is muttered to himself.

The splash of oars interrupts him. Barnes strides out of the room and goes hurriedly down to the landing place. "Quick, Graham," he calls, "is that you?"

"Yes," answers the mate, who is stepping from the boat; and he reports he has engaged a lateen-rigged fishing vessel, which, as soon as they have got some provisions and water on board, will be over with its Italian crew, probably in half an hour.

"Then leave every foreigner behind you," directs Barnes. "Pay them to stay on shore. You sail the craft with a few of your Scotch tars. The rest of your men we will leave here to assist Edwin in patrolling these grounds and taking care of his wife, whom you know is threatened also."

"Yes, by the cursed Corsican gang that is pursuing you," says the mate, adding a muttered oath. "I'll stand by you, sir, wi' my life. So will ilk braw laddie of mine!"

"Very well, I'll make my preparations and join you here," answers Barnes. "They won't take long;

my baggage will be little more than firearms and ammunition," he adds significantly. Suddenly turning to the mate, he pulls out a pocketbook filled with *billets de banque*, and handing some of them to the young Scotchman, says: "Try and purchase here some rifles with cartridges for you and your crew."

As he returns up the walk, among the ilex and orange trees, to Lady Chartris's villa, Mr. Barnes puts his pocketbook away, muttering: "Lucky I got these bankbills for my honeymoon cruise." Then he moans, half dazed: "Lucky—my honeymoon cruise?" though he will not think of his lost bride. Every mental energy must be devoted to rescuing her.

Entering the house, to go up to the chamber he had occupied, he passes the supper room, and noting Danella, though he is bending over Lady Chartris with almost the effusiveness of a lover, has his eyes always upon the attractive Marina, who is in consultation with her husband, Barnes enters.

To him, Edwin, springing up, says: "You've procured the craft to follow them?"

"Yes. Graham did that for me," and Barnes hurriedly tells the young English officer the arrangements he has made, adding: "You stay here, old man, and trust me to bring your sister back."

Again Marina, her face full of generous enthusiasm, cries: "Let me go to Corsica. You are a

foreigner, dear Mr. Barnes. In my own island I can do what you could not do—they all love me!"

"What! When they've been hunting you like a wild beast and sending you letters that make you faint!" shudders her husband.

"You're quite right, Lieutenant Anstruther," returns Danella, "in not permitting your wife to go. One unfortunate, helpless woman in that wild land amid the passions of their barbaric feud is pitiable to think of. To subject another, whose life is already threatened by the dagger of the vendetta, to a similar risk, would be hideous."

"I do not fear my kindred," answers Marina proudly. "My words, the rustics of my commune will believe. I should go."

"And have them murder you?" shudders her husband. "Never!"

"You forbid me to prove my innocence?" In her tone is the first rebellion Marina has ever shown her spouse.

"I do," answers the young officer in quarterdeck tones.

His young wife's only response is a plaintive sigh.

"Again you are right, Monsieur Anstruther. Of course, we know they loved Marina; still they might not believe," observes the Count, his ardent eyes resting upon the excited girl, whose very enthusiasm renders her more lovely. "I am now returning to

Nice, where Lady Chartris knows that I am at her command to do anything to aid her in this unfortunate matter. I shall drive out to-morrow."

"Yes, come soon," implores Prunella eagerly.

Here Maud, who had been gazing big-eyed on all this, suddenly bursts out: "Isn't it awful? Just think, Enid stood right there marrying you, Barnes, not an hour ago, and now what—WHAT are they doing to her?"

Her juvenile tactlessness produces a muttered oath from the sailor and a shuddering cry from her mother: "Stop your chatter, you minx!"

Barnes, his face that of a crazy man, leads Maud to the door and says in tones that chill her juvenile blood: "Good-night!"

"Oh, what have I done that everyone's down on me!" is the wail of the expelled one as she disappears in the distance.

"Under the circumstances, not being a member of this afflicted family, I take my leave," remarks Cipriano, controlling a hideous grin. "May you have good fortune, Signore Barnes, in your efforts. But remember one thing: In that barbaric island, they want your blood. You can only rescue your wife by risking it, but no suggestion from me is necessary to a brave and determined man!"

Danella would bow himself out, but Marina says eagerly: "Two words in private with you?"

"Certainly," answers the Count, and Barnes notes as the beautiful woman whispers to him a look of astonishment enters his mobile face.

After he has answered her, the girl says curtly: "I thank you, Signore."

"You may trust me, Madam," is the Count's reply; and courteously kisses the trembling fingers of Anstruther's beautiful wife, his eyes seemingly filled with a new and strange passion.

This is scarce noted by the American, whose misery distracts him.

A few moments later, Burton selects for himself a rough shooting costume that he has fortunately with him.

Then he hurriedly slings a field glass over his shoulder; puts one or two little trinkets, mementoes of his lost love, in his pocket; takes his valise with the articles it happens to contain, jamming all open spaces full of cartridges for his revolvers, and brings it downstairs with him.

Lady Chartris is in semi-hysterics with Maud. Marina stands in the hallway with her husband. To Barnes, as he wrings her hand, she whispers: "Remember, a dead man cannot take Enid from that barbarous home of mine. Therefore, guard your own life."

They step out on the porch. Some moving lights are at the landing place and they hear the swash of

sweeps and the cries of the Italian crew as they warp their fishing vessel up to the platform.

"Here, I'll go down with you and see you on board and your craft shipshape," remarks Anstruther. "Let me carry that rifle of yours."

"Come!" says Barnes, to whom every minute seems an hour, and hurries down the path; but as Edwin follows, Marina's white arms twine round him close, tight and clinging as if they couldn't let him go.

"Don't fear for me, you trembling dear," whispers her husband, kissing the excited face. "I'll be back soon."

"Soon?" With a sobbing sigh her fevered lips seek his again. Then with a sudden frantic effort, she releases him and whispers hoarsely: "Go!"

At the landing, Barnes finds he has quite a little to do paying the Italian fishermen to remain on shore as Graham is getting their stores and water properly arranged on the craft. Of this Anstruther now takes charge, but though he works with a will, it is almost half an hour before the young naval officer pronounces the fishing vessel shipshape in case of heavy weather. In this Barnes frantically assists him.

Then the young English officer leads the American aside and says, with the craft of a seaman: "Under this present breeze, if those devils you're in pursuit

of want to make their island quickly, they'll be compelled to strike its northwest coast somewhere near Porto. Graham will know how to steer the course. I'd go with you, but——"

"But your first duty is here to protect your wife."

"You think these devils haven't all gone away; that there is still danger for her?"

"Yes, keep a sharp eye on your loved one. That was my error," moans Burton. "I left Enid out of my sight for only a few minutes."

"Then good-by," says the sailor hurriedly, and wringing Barnes's hand, strides up the path to Lady Chartris's villa.

Then Burton stepping on board the fishing lugger, which is big enough to make the run to Corsica, they would immediately throw off their moorings to the little landing stage, but the Italian padrone of the craft, noting Barnes's haste seems great and his need extreme, steps up and demands additional recompense from the American milord for his vessel, declaring he will not let her go until he has more money; that his ship may be wrecked at sea and he has no insurance.

"Pay him!" mutters Barnes impatiently, and hands his pocketbook to Graham.

But payment takes some time, the light of the lantern not being very good and the Italian inspect-

ing every bill to see its value and again greedily imploring for more money, stating that his men will desert him if he gives them not speedy employment.

"Give him what he asks," cries Burton again; then pauses and mutters: "Good God!" and springs on shore! For a shout has rung out through the night air from Lady Chartris's villa and there is terror in it, and he knows it is the voice of the stout-nerved Anstruther, who would not give cry unless some sudden and uncanny despair had come upon him.

The American rushes up the path and a few steps from the door almost runs against Edwin. In the darkness the frenzied men seize each other, for Anstruther is now as frantic as himself. Recognising him, Barnes asks: "What's the matter?"

"By Heaven! Another blow in the dark! My wife has gone also!"

"Marina? Impossible! You have looked the grounds over? You have searched the house?"

"Here's a note from her, left in her chamber, begging me to forgive her, saying it is to save my life."

"My God, what horrible plot is it that has bereft us both in a moment?" asks Barnes. "If she had only told you the contents of that devilish letter."

The two are in the hall together, in their anguish,

their voices ring out loudly. A frightened-eyed, short-skirted creature runs to them, and tremblingly asks: "Did you want Marina's knock-out letter very much, Barnsey? The last part of it."

"It was perhaps Enid's life, perhaps the life of Edwin's bride."

"Well, then, I—I—oh, Great Jones, forgive me! I lied to you. I've got the letter—the last part of it; I was going to sell it to you for *marrons glacés* —I'll get it for you. It is tucked away in my lucky stocking for fear ma'll see it. It said something about murder! I'll—oh, don't look at me so awful!"

Maud flies upstairs and a moment later dashes back bringing the portion of the epistle.

Barnes seizes it. Both men attempt to read it.

As they try to decipher its cramped foreign hand, Lady Chartris, coming out wildly from her chamber, for now she fears she will be abducted herself, and is half crazy with fright, suddenly, looking over their shoulders, cries, half shrieking: "Oh, Heavens, Cipriano's writing!"

"You are sure?"

"I fear, I fear! I've got three love notes from him—this looks quite like his hand."

And the astounded and dismayed widow wrings her hands, her face pallid with jealous chagrin.

Suddenly she cries: "Away, Maud! These men

are talking of things children should not hear," and drags her offspring with her to the seclusion of her chamber.

For the bereft husbands' words are these:

"This is the most crafty, subtle and Satanic plot against your married happiness, Edwin," whispers Barnes. "As near as I can make out, this devilish missive says that Marina must desert you, her accursed English husband; then they will spare your life. If she remains with you, your fate will be hers. Your safety from death is offered as a bribe to your young wife if she deserts your bed and leaves herself open to the stilletos of these devils. If she stays with you and clings to you, you will be assassinated, even in her arms."

"Then the wife of my heart has left me fearing as the attack upon my sister's liberty has been successful their efforts against my life will be equally so," shudders Edwin; next cries out almost angrily: "She was mad not to trust me."

"Marina knew you wouldn't let her go if she did," suggests Burton more calmly.

But the other breaks in: "She is helpless in that devil's hands, who's tricked us both. This man means to kill her!"

"Not as you fear," mutters Barnes. "Cipriano doubtless came here, in his mind some infamous plot against your life and hers, but now I think the same

crazy passion for Marina that was in his brother has entered him. Never did your wife look more lovely than when she so nobly offered to go to Corsica to try and bring your sister back."

"Bring my sister back? That's why she's gone," asserts Anstruther. "Do you suppose any other consideration would have induced her to leave me? She thinks her word is potent among the friends of her childhood in Bocognano. She—she's gone to Corsica on that generous errand. That's what she always did—sacrificed herself. In the Egyptian hospitals she was the angel of mercy." Then his voice is strident with determination. "Marina is going to Corsica, Barnes, and I go with you. The vessel is there—come!" Anstruther's rapid strides are carrying him to the door of the hallway, but the American's voice stays him.

"She will never get to Corsica," says Barnes, sadly.

"Why not?"

"Why not? Danella longs for her. Couldn't you see his uncanny passion gradually growing as he looked upon her loveliness? No, she will not be permitted to get very far away from him. Don't you suppose his emissaries are alert now—the man with the scar over his eye that delivered this dastard note to her?" Then the tone of the American changes: he says very solemnly: "And yet, I think

you can thank God that the passion of the lover has entered this devil's heart and taken the passion of the assassin from it; for otherwise, with his thugs about her, your wife would now be dead."

The naval officer claps his hands to his brow in horror.

"You stay here and try and find Marina. As for me, my duty is to go to that island and if she is living, to bring back my bride—if she is dead, avenge her!" continues Burton.

"That is my duty here, rescue or avenge Marina!" cries the Englishman.

Barnes leaves his brother-in-law arming himself and making ready to go out of the villa in pursuit of the loved one he has lost, and hurries down the path to the water. The darkness is now so great he can scarce discern the little fishing vessel still tied up to the landing stage. He rapidly springs over her low freeboard, and calls: "Get under way!" The alert Graham is already at her helm; her big lateen sails are hoisted flapping in the soft air, and a moment later under a smart breeze the little craft is gliding toward the entrance of the Bay of Villefranche.

The twinkling lights of the naval station are soon behind them. Then as they pass the Mont Boron headland, to these are added the illuminations of the more distant Nice.

"That devil Cipriano is there—can he have Edwin's wandering wife already in his clutches?" Barnes thinks moodily as his eyes rest on the myriad lights of the great watering place. "Would that I had killed Satanis to-night, but his supreme tact and his tremendous nerve to remain there calm as an iceberg, for the moment tricked me into thinking him innocent."

The illuminations of Nice fade away in the darkness of the night to the American upon the deck of the fishing vessel, which now, under a fresh and increasing breeze, is bounding through the water.

Graham is still at the wheel, Barnes pacing the little deck of the silent craft. His steely eyes peer into the gloomy blank ahead of him. His life seems a blank also. To-night he had expected the love-lit eyes of his fairy bride to be beside him on a honeymoon cruise. Now! He smites his hands despairingly together. "If hurt comes to her in the wild Corsican mountains, if death——" his hand involuntarily reaches his pistol.

He turns to Graham at the wheel and asks: "How long before we reach Corsica?"

"With this breeze, I dinna think before early to-morrow."

"You are carrying all the sail possible?"

"Every cloth she has."

Barnes turns to step into the cabin.

"You're going down to try and get a wee bit o' sleep, I ha' hopes," remarks the Scotch mate sympathetically.

"Sleep?" the American laughs as if in mockery of the idea, yet goes below and tries to force his mind to the common sense of this strange abduction, incidentally carefully preparing his firearms and inspecting their cartridges.

The next morning with the first rays of the sun, Barnes is on deck again, peering toward the east, and before him is a blue haze that Graham, who is again at the wheel, says is Corsica.

Barnes eagerly walks toward the bow, as if to bring himself a little nearer to the being for whom his very soul is seeking.

But now some few feet from the stem of the little vessel, a figure that has been crouching under the low bulwarks, rises, half shrouded by the sea fog, before him. After two glances to make his astounded eyes believe, he gasps: "Marina!"

For the wife of Anstruther, with some wraps thrown over her fête costume of the night before, stands before him, the fresh breeze twining the garments about her ethereal figure till she seems risen from the mists of the morning.

"My God, why have you come here?"

"To try and save your wife, the sister of my husband!" cries the Corsican girl. "You couldn't

have done it. You know too little of this curious island and its customs. To you, a stranger, every one of that jealous, suspicious race would be an enemy—to me, born with them—the name of my family adored—some will be friends. You would surely fail, I may succeed!"

"You should have told your husband." The American's voice is almost stern.

"I dared not! Edwin would not have let me go. My darling values me too highly to risk a hair of my head on such a venture," answers the Corsican bride proudly.

"Why didn't you tell me when I came on board? You lay here unsheltered all night save by the bulwarks," utters Burton sympathetically.

"The night was warm; the wind, though strong, was balmy. Besides, I waited till you were *near enough to Corsica* not to turn back from it, even to restore me to my husband. There is the island. There I will help you find your bride. Enid shall not die nor suffer because she is the sister of my husband or because she is your wife."

One white arm of the girl is extended toward the cloud of blue that is Corsica, the wind twining her light robe about her graceful form, her eyes on fire with resolute hope, her exquisite face filled with a courage as undaunted as before the dastard letter in the Marseilles railroad depot struck down her

spirit and made her the nervous invalid of the yacht's cruise.

"Great Scott, you're the Marina of old!" he exclaims in astonished admiration.

"Of course I am," she answers buoyantly. "My darling husband is for the moment safe. Their letter which branded me as traitor to my race for marrying Edwin, says if I desert my husband they will spare him. Corsicans keep their devilish promises. These assassins will think I have abandoned the husband of my heart and will spare him till I return to again nestle in his arms and shield him with my very life against these fiends of the blood feud."

Marina stands inspired by a wife's love, a being so beautiful that Barnes thinks: "No wonder she lighted the flames of passion in the mediæval heart of Cipriano Danella, who came to execute her on the altar of his uncanny vengeance."

BOOK III

CHAPTER XI

"BEWARE THE PATH AHEAD OF YOU!"

THE American paces the deck more buoyantly; reflection shows him what a prodigious aid Marina's knowledge of her native island, its proud, vengeful race and curious customs, will be to him in his search for his lost bride.

Of this he has almost immediate evidence. Both have their eyes upon Corsica. The mists of the morning are slowly rising from the bluff headlands of Cape Rosso; before the vessel's bow rises the old Genoese watch tower that guards the little harbour of Porto, from which is shipped the pine timber of the great Valdoniello forest.

The alert Graham, who has gazed from the stern astounded at the sudden appearance of Mrs. Anstruther on board his craft, leaving the wheel to a jack tar, now comes forward and touching his hat to the lady, says: "Pleased to see you on board, ma'am, though I'm afraid, Mr. Barnes, you'll not think we kept a very good watch on deck. Our eyes

were always on the sea, trying to catch sight of the damned pirates." A moment later, he remarks: "With this wind, we can make the coast a wee bit farther to the sou'."

"Then do so!" commands Marina. "Make a landing, if you can, nearly fifteen miles below here at Sagone."

"Why?" asked Barnes, some surprise in his tone.

"Sagone by its mountain path is the nearest port to Bocognano. They dare never convey your wife through Ajaccio. A single word from her to anyone on the streets of the capital would bring De Belloc and his soldiers to the rescue, if the gendarmes didn't do their duty. By the wild mountain paths they can take Enid to Bocognano unobserved and unquestioned by the wood cutters of the forest glens or the shepherds of the steep pastures of Del Oro."

"You think the *Seagull* will be at Sagone?"

"I hope so," answers the girl. "That will be proof that they are taking her to Bocognano."

"Hoping to have a visit from me. They shall have one that Corsica will remember," mutters Barnes, a steely glint in his eyes.

"Pah," answers the girl, her pride of race springing up in her, "our mountaineers can fight as well as you. The Bellacoscia brothers can shoot nigh as well with the carbine as you with your pistols. If you hope to rescue your wife by mere

force of arms, you had better stay on board and let me go to Bocognano alone to see if my friends cannot help me bring Enid back to you."

To this the American wisely makes no reply, but by his direction Graham immediately alters the course of the vessel further to the south, and they dash down the picturesque coast of the island, whose forest clad mountains run to the very waters of the sea, till they weather the point of Cargese and open the beautiful Gulf of Sagone, now calm as a summer lake.

Here, to the east, in the far recesses of the bay, is a sail gleaming white under the sun that has just risen over the wooded headlands.

Barnes puts his field glasses upon it and for a moment thinks it some fishing craft, but the Scotch mate leaving the wheel to a seaman's hands, springs forward, takes a long look at it; then borrows the American's glasses and runs nimbly up the rigging to the top of the mast.

From his eerie post he calls excitedly: "By St. Andrew, it's the *Seagull!*"

"Can Enid be on board of her?" is heard in Marina's anxious voice.

"I can ne'er believe it," answers Graham, as he descends to the deck, "for the vessel is anchored."

"Anchored! With all her sails up?" dissents Barnes.

"Oh, that's the way the loons have left the craft."

"You are sure?"

"Oh, I'm muckle sure of her mainsail," asserts Graham, his Scotch growing more pronounced in his excitement, "but by the deil, I'm equally certain no one is on board of her. No crew who weren't daft would leave a craft anchored in that lubberly way and risk their bones aboard of it."

"For God's sake, get us to the yacht!" commands the American.

But despite every exertion, for the breeze has died with the rising sun, it is another hour before they fan their way near the *Seagull*. Upon its deck is a solitary man, who frantically screams to them: "*A moi, mes amis!* Rescue me! *Sacré bleu*, ze pirate *cochons* have left me. I am Lebœuf, ze cook!"

"Take heart; we'll board ye, braw Lebœuf!" shouts Graham, and carefully conned by the Scotch mate, the fishing vessel is run alongside of the *Seagull*. The light swell permits them to spring from one little craft to the other, and in a moment Barnes has assisted Marina onto the yacht's deck.

Here they are met by volatile exclamations and explanations, from Monsieur Lebœuf. "*Diable*, Monsieur Barnes," he cries sympathetically, "ze pirates have carried your bride away. Zey boarded me at ze moment I was placing your nuptial supper

on ze cabin table last evening. Zen zey gagged me till I could not speak. One—two—three minutes and she came on board in ze blackness. Expecting to meet you, Madame Barnes ran down into ze cabin, and zen——"

"Then?" Barnes's face is set like that of a statue.

"Zen zey locked ze cabin door upon Madame, and though she cry out, pay no more attention to her till zey had got under way. Zen—zen——"

"What next?" Burton's voice is hoarse.

"Aftaire zat, zey come to me and say: 'No harm to you. Cook us a good meal,' and one young man, handsome-faced, bright-eyed, well-dressed gallant, he gave me a louis and said: 'Feed us well but feed us on deck. We are gentlemen; we do not intrude upon a lady.' Zen I give zem, *mon Dieu*, ze beautiful meal I have prepared for your first *diner de noces*. Ah, how ze pirates ate it!"

"How many were there?" interjects Barnes hurriedly.

"About four, monsieur. Only one know how to sail ze ship. But ze night is fine and aftaire bringing me to make ze breakfast during ze darkness, *ce matin* at four bells, ze one who knew ze coast steered us here. Zen zey drop ze anchor and cry to me: 'Cook, stay on board. You tell ze cursed Americano, Signore Barnes of New York to come to

Bocognano if he would rescue his wife. We have greeting for him zere vitch he vill not forget!' *Apres*, zay all take off zaire hats, as ze young cavalier bring upon deck your beautiful lady, who looked like a goddess, so haughty, so noble. To him as he bowed before her, she says: 'Monsieur Bernardo Saliceti, you who were vere *un gentilhomme* a few days ago and have now become a kidnapper, tell your savages to keep zaire hands off me and I vill go with you.'

"To me she command as she stepped into ze boat: 'Lobœuf, have a good meal for Mr. Barnes, who vill be coming soon!' Zay were rowing her in ze boat to ze shore, she looking so beautiful in ze little bride's travelling robe zat had been sent on board with Madame's baggage.

"To her, I cry: 'I'll have a vaire fine dinner for Monsieur, your husband.' Zen she look at me with her eyes. I know she means I am not to forget something. Ah, your *mariée* vas vaire brave. Only once in ze long night, as I listen with my ears, I hear from ze cabin a short, quick sob: 'My husband!' and zis morning her soft eyes were vaire deep in her head for you, Monsieur."

As she listens, there are tears in Marina's dark orbs. By the horrors of her own wedding night, the beautiful Corsican knows what a bride suffers when she fears her spouse will meet the stiletto.

"My wife's eyes told you to remember something? What was it?" asks Barnes very eagerly, though his gaze is dim.

"Oh, *voilà!* Vhen ze ruffians were preparing ze boat for her, Madame whispered in my ear: 'Tell my husband to look in ze third drawer of ze cabin locker.'"

Before the last words have left the Frenchman's lips, the American is down the companionway and has torn open the drawer indicated. Wincing at the sight of some articles of lady's lingerie packed by Tompson during the previous day for her mistress's honeymoon use, the bridegroom hurriedly tosses them aside and produces a note, the superscription of which, in the dear hand he knows, makes him falter. It is simply addressed: "Mr. Burton H. Barnes," and reads:

My Darling Husband:

I have little time to write, for they are preparing to take me on shore in a boat. We are now anchored off Corsica somewhere.

Last evening, through some careless message of Tompson misinterpreted by my own eagerness, I came on board the yacht alone, thinking you had gone there before me to avoid some encounter with Danella that might delay our wedding trip. A boat was waiting for me at the landing place. In the darkness, during the short hundred yards to the yacht, I noticed nothing suspicious in the oarsmen, probably because my thoughts were so entirely of you.

Flying into the cabin expecting to meet you, I heard the doors close upon me and a voice in Corsican French say:

"She is ours!" Then the slipping of bolts outside told me I was a prisoner. No cries of mine or commands were heeded. The yacht got under way.

Ah, what a night I've passed here in this cabin that should have been our honeymoon home, thinking of your misery when you found you had lost me.

But knowing by your love that you will pursue and find me, I send you this warning, which is of great importance.

I have learned by some careless French conversation that has drifted in to me that I am to be made the lure to bring you to the death of the Vendetta in Bocognano. To me Saliceti has boasted that they have notified you they take me to Corsica. They are sure your affection for me will make you follow me, rash and careless in your agony. There Saliceti means to assassinate you, thinking by that to gain the votes of his peculiar countrymen because he has nobly fulfilled his diabolical oath of the horrible vendetta that they worship. Therefore, by your love for me, my husband, I charge you not to risk your dear life unduly, and to bring with you enough friends to protect you from these assassins. I hear the splash of the boat put overboard; they will be coming for me, so kiss the letter where I sign and you'll meet the lips of, in life or death, always, YOUR WIFE.

Clenching his hands till his nails are bloodless, Barnes reads this letter carefully twice. Once he gazes up; but the sight of the cabin decorated for his honeymoon, about which are scattered his wife's dainty belongings brought on board for a nuptial voyage, makes him close his misty eyes with a shudder.

Lebœuf is now calling down the companionway: "Monsieur, I have obeyed your wife's commands. A good meal is served on deck for you and Madame Anstruther."

He must eat to keep his strength up for the work that is ahead of him. The American steps alertly on deck and tries to show his appreciation of the French chef's art, but anguish is a bar to appetite.

Marina also only drinks a cup of coffee.

During this Graham puts two or three of his sailors on board the yacht; they lower the sails and make the *Seagull* for the moment shipshape.

After a moment Barnes passes Enid's letter over to Edwin's wife. When she has read it, he says: "I have been thinking if it wouldn't be better to sail to Ajaccio and get De Belloc and some of his troopers to go with us to Bocognano."

"With De Belloc and his troopers you would never find her," answers Marina. "The sight of their cavalry uniforms would be signalled up the Valley of the Gravona; Enid would not be in Bocognano. In the mountain fastnesses of Del Oro they would hide her where you would never find her."

"Then some honest countrymen, from this neighbourhood; they can be hired?" suggests Barnes.

"But not by a foreigner to strike against a Corsican," replies Marina, almost proudly. "To have any hope of finding your wife we must go alone. I'll lead you by secret paths through the mountains; on the main road did they see you coming they would ambush and kill you." Then noting that the young man is loading himself down with cartridges, she

almost sneers: "Don't hope to shoot your way through my island, where every shepherd and farmer carries a gun; your best reliance will be Corsican innate hospitality and Corsican inherent love of justice." Her eyes looked eagerly upon the shore, she rises and says, resolutely: "Come!"

Barnes, more eager than she, quickly dresses himself in the simple hunting suit he has brought with him.

"Oh, you must look more Corsican," cries the girl, and deftly puts a cock's feather plucked from one of his bride's bonnets in his hat. "Some soot, Felix," she commands the cook, "to make Monsieur's eyebrows darker and his moustache black."

"Yes, that's it!" she adds eagerly.

"And you?" asks Barnes, placing his eyes on Marina's white Parisian fête dress.

"Oh, I've brought a Corsican peasant's costume with me," and the lady calls to Graham to bring on board a little bundle she had left upon the deck of the fishing smack.

Then Marina runs down the companionway and secludes herself in the salon while Barnes gives his directions to Graham. "You had better return that fishing boat to Villefranche by two of your crew."

"Yes, even a land lubber can sail her across in this fine weather without any trouble," answers the mate. "Now, as for me, Mr. Barnes, I'm unco

ready, I and my jolly jacks, to follow you to the top o' that crag," and he points to distant Del Oro, " and take our chance of life or death against those Corsican caterans for the sake o' the beautiful lady we gie our hearts to when she was on the yacht."

" I am sorry, my gallant fellow, I cannot take you with me," answers the American; " only Marina and I must go."

" Hoot, man! not lone wi' that delicate lassie."

" We are safer alone than with a few," replies Barnes. " But have the yacht ready to sail and a sharp lookout kept for me. During the night have a boat ashore there with a couple of men in it, so that, if necessary, I may immediately come on board of you."

" Aye, aye! Night and day I'll look for you," answers the mate.

" Now, bring the boat alongside."

" Not yet, Monsieur," cries Lebœuf, issuing from the galley, " not without something to eat, to support you and Madame," and he produces a big haversack filled with provisions.

" You're right. By evening we shall be hungry, if not before," answers the American, " and it will be best to avoid as much as possible native inns." He calls: " Madame Anstruther, I am ready! "

" And so am I." And Marina trips to the deck,

a peasant girl of her island—her dark brown tresses shaded by the graceful *mandile* and a *faldetta* of grey cloth draping her agile figure. Her short skirts disclose her delicate feet shod in strong country shoes fit for use over the stones of mountain paths.

Both are eager. Within five minutes they are in the boat, and pulled by two Scotch tars, soon land upon the rocky shore. As Marina's feet touch the soil, she looks at it passionately and murmurs bitterly: "To think that I come back to my native island with the hands of so many of the friends of my childhood against me, with so many hearts that once turned toward me turned away." Then she draws herself up and says desperately, yet proudly: "But I will show to them my hands are free of the blood of Tomasso Monaldi." Bitter tears glisten coursing down her cheeks, as she falters: "That I should be compelled to prove that I plotted no harm to the dear old man I loved is monstrous and horrible. Saliceti, because he would have votes from the simple peasants and wood cutters, has branded me murderess! I will brand him liar! I am a Corsican!" The same fire flashes in her eyes as when she bent over her brother's dead body after the duel, and decreed the vendetta that has brought such misery to them all.

This is the spirit Barnes needs in his companion

for this adventure, undaunted resolution, undying courage. "*En avant!*" he says, almost cheerfully.

Clambering over the sea-washed rocks, they reach the green woodland, and soon through its soft foliage of ilex, beech and wild citron, tread a romantic path that leads them to the more dusty highway which skirts the coast, slightly to the south of the little quay of Sagone. This Marina says is fortunate, that they need not excite curiosity by passing through the seaside village to reach the road to Vico, by which they will strike east to reach the vast glen between Monte Rotondo and Monte Del Oro, whose great peaks tipped with snow loom up above the series of hills running from their bases, which are clothed by pine forests and chestnut woods with that soft yet vivid green so charming in Corsican landscapes.

A little while along this road, roasting beneath the hot sun and stifled by the dust of early summer, when Marina says, pointing to a farmer's house: "Stay here and I'll bargain for the use of two of the native ponies I see in his barnyard."

A few minutes of apparently excited gesticulation and talk with the peasant who is hoeing in his field, and she brings into the road two sturdy, shaggy brown ponies.

Mounting astride one of these, Corsican fashion, Marina says almost gaily: "We have the beasts for

a week at thirty francs apiece. Now I feel at home again."

Upon the other Barnes would dash forward, but some very serious words from his companion stop him. "It was lucky I saw that farmer. He said: 'I would give you a more gentle beast, girl, had not four men three hours ago engaged my gentle Mandalina for a lady's use. Of course, my best was at Signore Saliceti's order. I had heard him speak up in the mountains at the polling booth great words on the glory of Corsica, which had given France a Bonaparte and one day would give her another.'"

Suddenly the girl calls: "But you cannot overtake Enid in a second," for the American's heels are beating a tattoo on the sides of his sturdy little cob, and he is hurrying forward muttering: "Three hours ahead of me. Perhaps we can overtake my darling before night!"

"Don't ride so fast," exclaims his companion, galloping her pony to him. Then her voice growing very solemn, she says warningly: "From some hilltop, should we get too near, they will see us coming, and in a vendetta ambush, some knife might reach not only your heart but—Enid's. When you have enemies in Corsica, beware the path ahead of you!"

CHAPTER XII

THE MOUNTAIN CHALÊT

Forced to a more moderate pace, the two journey up the winding road between some cornfields made red by poppies. Soon after they pass into the wooded hill lands, their path bordered by myrtles and arbutus. Once they pause to drink at a cool fountain and a boy of sixteen, who is followed by a herd of goats, and has a gun slung over his shoulder, says: "'Tis good, Signorita, your man has a rifle, if you journey toward the *macchia*. Rochini has come out of his cavern."

After a little, the way grows wilder, the hills much steeper, and climbing the lofty Colle di San Antonio they can look down upon hill vistas, beautifully wooded, that descend to the distant sea. In the sunlit gleam of the far-off water, Barnes, using his field glasses, sees the yacht lying alone at anchor. "Graham has sent back the fishing smack," he says.

"Then thank the Virgin," cries Marina, "another letter is going to my husband telling him his disobedient wife is trying to save his sister." Here the heroine's brave eyes filled with tears; she smites her

little hands together and mutters: "In Egypt, Edwin never forgave disobedience in his men. Oh, Signore Barnes, will he forgive me?"

"He will probably kiss you to death when he puts his hands on you," remarks the American, shortly.

"*Dio mio*, what a happy execution!" exclaims the volatile creature, and urges her pony after that of her companion, who has again turned his eager eyes toward the great mountains, that are nearer.

They descend sharply into the little valley of the Liamone, and enter the village of Vico, whose inn is now welcoming the first summer visitors from Ajaccio.

Here Marina says: "'Twould be wrong if I sent not a telegram to my anxious spouse." So they dismount at the little telegraph office peculiar to Corsican villages. As they slip in, a countryman slouches out and mounting a horse rides off up the main street. Her message despatched, Marina coming from the office, says: "How hurriedly that fellow went away."

"You think he was looking for us?" asks Barnes, as he places her on her pony.

"Perhaps; Bernardo is astute. He may guess that his message to you brought you after him by water and that you would find the yacht."

"Then after him!" says Burton, and turning more to the east they follow a rapid stream, passing

the Sulphur Baths of Guagno, where they can see the diligence depositing patients at its hospital for rheumatics.

They have not overtaken the man, but no one has passed them on the road, their pace has been so rapid. The peasants they have seen, so many of them carrying guns that Barnes thinks he is in the Rocky Mountains, have received the usual greetings in the patois of the country from Marina, her escort wisely keeping his sombrero pulled down over his eyes and saying nothing. But now a farmer, pausing, says: "Girl, you and your man had better not go beyond Guagno. Last night the two accursed bandits, Rochini and his mate, killed Nicolo, the sheep grower, up at his house by the lake and carried off his daughter."

"Thank you for your advice," answers Marina politely. She glances at Barnes, but he scarcely heeds. He is urging his pony toward the mountain pass through which Enid must now be journeying.

Finally two men come along, their guns slung over their velveteen coats. With them is a woman bearing a child; a donkey cart carries some household implements and a flock of goats is following them. The men moodily respond to Marina's salute; the woman runs after her and says under her breath: "You were Signorita Paoli; I beg you to keep from the mountain path. Rochini and his villain comrade,

Romano, last night slew the farmer who lived up the pass from us and carried off the daughter, poor Alicia. I give you warning, though you espoused the Englishman who slew your brother."

Then one of the men calls after her and she darts away, leaving Marina with tears of shame in her eyes. "*Mon Dieu*, they all believe it of me," sighs the girl. "On the other side of the mountains where all know me, what shall I do?"

"Who is this Rochini?" asks Barnes, to take Mrs. Austruther's thoughts to happier things.

"He and his fellows are the only bandits of which Corsica is not proud," answers the girl, savagely. "This wretch with his underlings murders men *for money*. Other bandits only kill for hate or to escape capture by the gendarmes. Also this Rochini drags shrieking women to his lair, while other bandits doff their hats to ladies."

Then as they ride along the Corsican girl gives Mr. Barnes some curious information about bandits.

"This murderous Rochini is not of our commune; he has been driven from Rotondo by the farmers because of his outrages and came over to Del Oro," she remarks, excitedly. "Our own Bocognano bandits, the brave Bellacoscia," Marina's tone is proud, "whose family name is Bonelli, only fled to the mountains to escape pursuit from our cruel gendarmes, because, forsooth, the elder Antonio killed

Marc' Angeli, who dared to marry the girl upon whom he had set his heart. The younger, Giacomo, because he would not endure the French conscription, so he slew the brigadier and his men who came to arrest him. Still Antonio Bonelli, when the Teutons overran France, offered to go over and fight the German Von Moltke with his five hundred Bellacoscia—brothers, sons, grandsons and nephews—if they would give him safe conduct from arrest. At first Monsieur Gambetta accepted, then he refused, fearing there might be a new Bonaparte among these Corsicans to again save France and rule the country."

"Oh, we are devoted to the Bellacoscia," she continues fervidly. "Every boy by the wayside gives them warning of the gendarmes; every child picking flowers in the mountains tells them of the coming of the brigadiers who would capture or slay them. Though many men and women, some of gentle blood, are placed in prison for aiding them, the authorities never receive information from their lips. Why, over a score of the Bellacoscia danced at my wedding. Dark-eyed men with sheepskin coats, all armed with double-barrelled guns, carbines, and stilettos with 'vendetta' engraved upon them. But these wretches, Rochini and Romano, are abhorred by all, and blessings would be showered on any who might bring their bodies into Bocognano."

Barnes has heard something of the Bellacoscia, as everyone who has ever been in Corsica has, but he cannot restrain a smile at the girl's fervid sympathy for bandits.

All this has been said as they hurried through the dust and sun for three more miles. They enter the village of Guagno. There is no way of avoiding the hamlet; it stands almost at the entrance of the deep gorge between the two great mountains—besides, the ponies need rest.

"It would be better if we were not seen here," suggests Marina, "though the inn looks comfortable."

"And you must both rest and eat," remarks Barnes, who has noticed that his fragile companion, unaccustomed to the severe exercise of horseback travel in the hot sun and stifling dust, is somewhat fatigued.

They ride up to the auberge, dismount and give their ponies to the care of a Corsican boy, who leads them away.

Entering, they are met by the loquacious landlord, who tells them, as they demand a hurried meal, that business is not very brisk, the season being too early for many invalids at the baths, besides all travellers are kept from the mountains beyond by fear of Rochini and Romano.

"May the curse of God rest on them—they spoil

my business even down here," says the hotel man savagely as he goes to bring the food.

"I do not think you had better go with me farther," remarks Barnes seriously.

"What, stand back because a murderer threatens the way to Enid?" cries Marina. "Besides, you can shoot your pistol."

"Then may God curse me if I let harm come to you for your devotion to my wife," returns the American with grateful eyes.

"Then I'm safe," says the Corsican girl simply, who has supreme faith in the deadly marksmanship of her escort.

From the little garden outside, the conversation of two rustics drifts in to them. One is apparently a local wool buyer, the other a shepherd from the neighbouring mountain, who is bargaining with him for his shearing.

A moment later their host places the dinner in front of them. "Here are trout from our Liamone, a filch of moufflon killed on Rotondo and some chianti made from the vines outside. Real moufflon, real chianti, besides chestnuts from my own grove!" he remarks proudly, as he arranges their knives and forks.

"You have also a few visitors, I presume, to eat them?" queries Marina, sympathetically.

"Oh, none to-day; there are not enough invalids

at the baths; the season is too early. Besides, young Saliceti didn't stop here with his party, but hurried on three hours ago. Does that young statesman expect to get the vote of Vincenzo, the landlord? Not even a drink of wine did he buy. But the reprobate has an eye for beauty if not for political influence. A yellow-haired girl was with him, though his followers kept so close about her I could not see her face. *Gran Dio,* if Etheria, the black head, the daughter of the dead Monaldi, who was shot by the soldiers, sees the yellow head, she will put dagger in her like her father did into poor Musso Danella. But I give you additional warning. To-night you must stay in my inn. Toward the mountains there is another bandit, an extra one."

"An extra bandit!" Barnes opens his eyes.

"How do you know that?" asks Marina.

"How? Why, even the accursed Rochini and his fellow, who murder men and seize women, never steal from *me,* who fearing their knives give them wine and warning of the gendarmes; but this new fellow sneaks down at night and eats my chickens. May Satan take him, he has the appetite of a table d'hôte!"

"Nevertheless, we must risk the unprofessional chicken thief and go to the mountains," says Marina, determinedly, as she goes away, attended by mine host, to make preparations for her departure.

Barnes, having five minutes for a whiff, produces his cigar case, and utters an execration—in his haste and anxiety he has brought no supply with him and has only one Havana left, but some words entering from the two rustics amid the vines of the garden outside, cause him to forget even his last cigar.

Their trade being closed, they are now discussing local news. "*Diavolo*," remarks the wool trader, "did you meet young Saliceti on the road?"

"Aye, that I did, three miles above, near the waterfall. To me he said: 'Good Luigi, shall I have your vote for deputy?' 'That you will,' said I, 'great Saliceti, when you perform your oath of vendetta against the Americano who came to Bocognano and by De Belloc's soldiers killed the man who would have been your father-in-law.' 'Then I shall have it,' he cried. 'Just wait here for a couple of hours, and you'll see it done.' But I had to meet you to sell my wool, besides I remembered Rochini and his murderous gun, and so I came along."

"*Cospetto*, if Saliceti does it, he has my vote also!" cries the wool trader. "The crafty politician must have the Americano trapped somehow. It was rumoured that the devil fled with the Englishman whom Mademoiselle Paoli wedded, though he had slain her brother. *Santos*, may death come to a girl who for lust betrays her race."

To this Barnes listens impatiently but seriously.

Then spends the last moments of his cigar contemplating the problem before him into which has entered the strange complication of politics. Barnes knows Corsico indifferently well. He has been on the island twice and spent a month or so hunting moufflon with the dead Danella on the crags of the great mountains Rotondo and Del Oro, which rise above him, but the passions of a race who will elect a man to office because he has committed the murder of the vendetta he cannot analyse. For that is the principal reason he is now convinced that actuates the young politician Bernardo Saliceti in his devilish course to Enid and himself.

"This political hustler wants to sacrifice me on their altar of vengeance, so as to draw their votes," cogitates Barnes savagely. "By the Eternal, he shall have an ox at his barbecue who will disagree with his stomach!"

There is a peculiar glint in the American's eyes as, five minutes later, he places Marina carefully upon her pony, and they leave the inn. He has inspected his weapons carefully; he now asks almost lightly: "By the bye, Madame Anstruther, do you know a waterfall some three miles up this path?" For all traces of a waggon road have ended at Guagno, leaving only a little bridle path that runs up the foaming Liamone, which, contracted in its banks, has become a torrent.

Marina thinks a moment; then says: "Oh, yes; I remember a mountain trail often travelled as a girl. But it is very steep."

"Would you kindly show it to me when we come to it?"

They dash up the gorge for half a mile and she says sharply, "It is here," pointing to a steep ascent that, cumbered by ferns and wild-flowers, makes a most unpromising roadway. Then she catches her breath and whispers: "You expect an ambush?" for the American has now his rifle on the saddle in front of him, Western fashion, and his pistols ready in his belt.

"I do," answered Barnes, and relates the words of the shepherd.

"Quick!" cries the girl. "This trail will take you right up Del Oro, where you can look down on Bocognano. By it, you will get between your enemies and your destination."

"My destination is my wife. She is in this valley with those men."

"Oh, I think not. Saliceti is too crafty. He is still conveying Enid to Bocognano and has left only some of his followers to slay you. Come on."

Barnes follows his guide up the steep little path, that covered with vines and wild-flowers is difficult to discern, but after they had gone a few hundred yards, the rocks growing larger, the trail more precipitous,

Marina says: "Here we must leave our ponies and climb on foot." So they pasture the two hardy little brutes in a vale full of soft grasses and leave them munching contentedly, Barnes, slinging his haversack over his shoulder, Marina having nothing to carry with her.

Before her now strides the American, his alert eyes always glancing down the steep declivities to their left, for the almost unused trail they are following is hundreds of feet above the travelled bridle path that keeps to the torrent, dashing through the bottom of the valley. After nearly an hour of this, the noise of a waterfall strikes their ears, gradually growing louder.

Five minutes later, Barnes holds up his hand cautiously. Marina's glance follows his; far below them, concealed in the big rocks that skirt the stream at the little bridge near the waterfall, are several crouching armed men. A little farther down the rapid, in the top of a big beech tree, is perched another, his hand shading his eyes from the rays of the declining sun that shines in his face as he looks down the pathway coming from the east. The mountain sides are clothed with ilex, beech and larch trees, decked with mistletoe and climbing cyclamen, the fragrance from the myriad flowers of Corsica mix with the sweet odours of the pine and spruce—above the cliffs, the hills rise abruptly to the great

summits of Del Oro and Rotondo, spears of snow in transparent air, below flows the rushing torrent, a living stream of sunshine. The vale is paradise, filled with death.

"These gentlemen are waiting for me," remarks the American, in his face the supreme joy of a sportsman who will bag not only one head, but a battue. He puts his rifle on the ground, loosens both revolvers in his belt and asks: "The way to descend the precipice from here?"

"Why?" falters the girl.

"Why? Because I am now the hunter," answers Barnes. "Do you think I am going to spare the wretches who have stolen my wife? None of them! Quick, the path by which I can intercept them and cut them off to the last man!"

Marina looks at his fatal pistols and shudders! "Thank God, there is no path!"

"Ah, then I will have to be content with the sentry, that fellow in the beech tree there."

"My God, if you kill any of them," gasps Marina, "you will never get Enid out of the island alive. You came to save her, not to murder her." She puts a white imploring hand on Barnes, who is already preparing his rifle. Then she suddenly half cries: "Your wife! You want her!" and points far up to the top of the pass between the two great mountains, Rotondo and Del Oro, and Barnes's eyes fol-

lowing her hand, he sees figures silhouetted against the clear blue Alpine air. All are mounted, and one is surely a woman.

"You think that is my wife?"

"I am sure of it. Saliceti has only left some of his men behind to waylay you if you come on unguardedly."

Barnes doesn't even answer her. His quick steps are carrying him so rapidly in pursuit along the dizzy mountain path that Marina, though the poor girl half runs, can scarce keep up with him.

Their path leads along the precipices, now and again reaching some little mountain valley through which a stream trickles between stunted pines, and about whose rocks are growing the sweet forget-me-nots and violets of Corsica. Once they skirt rapidly a little blue lake whose waters fall over a cliff to join the Liamone, running far below, and so on and on toward the upper slopes of the Del Oro.

But as they near the summit of the mountain, darkness comes also and a blinding mist, cold with the chill of melted snow, descends upon them, and enveloping them with a fleecy sheen, the rocks and lichens about the path are shrouded from their gaze.

They are above the timber line and the great bare granite blocks bruise Marina's tender feet as they stumble among them.

The girl lays her hand upon her companion's arm.

"We may reach the summit before darkness," she pants, out of breath, "but the dizzy descent on the other side is impossible without daylight."

"I remember," answers Burton. "I have passed down it hunting moufflon." Then he takes off his hunting coat and places it carefully over the delicate shoulders of his fragile companion, already shivering in her light summer garment under the icy mist about her. "I am thinking of some shelter for you, for we must pass the night upon the mountain," he says tenderly; then asks anxiously: "Do you know one?"

"Y-e-s," she replies, her teeth chattering, "if we can reach it in this storm. The little châlet where poor old Tomasso sometimes took me when he brought me here as a child to pluck the flowers of the mountain."

With this she turns abruptly to the left, and Barnes following her, they struggle up a couloir filled with massive boulders, but nearing the summit the mist becomes colder, the wind sharper and the gloom more deep. Surrounded, as they are, by frightful precipices, this is appalling.

"I've lost my way," mutters Marina, her voice low with faintness, but a moment after she cries: "Ah, see the granite cliff. Follow its wall! The cabin is beneath it. But beware! beyond the cabin there is a very deep crevice."

The wind howls about them. The night is even blacker, but keeping the sheen of the cliff close at his left, Barnes stumbles over the granite slabs almost carrying the exhausted girl. Finally, compelled by the howling of the wind, he calls into her ear: "Courage! I see the hut. Thank God, someone has a fire inside it."

"Perhaps it is made by the awful bandits, the Rochini and Romano who murder so many poor travellers," shudders Marina.

But undeterred by this, using the light as a beacon, her escort rapidly approaches the open door of the little cabin, from which issues a cheerful gleam.

Suddenly they pause, for a deep tone issues threateningly from its interior: "Hola, if you are gendarmes, beware of me!"

"*Madre mia*," gasps Marina, with a low scream, "that voice." Her eyes roll in her head.

"Bandit or no bandit, you shall give us warmth and shelter!" calls Barnes in answer. Then he, too, stands astounded, as from the rough door strides a man, and outlined by the flickering blazes and surrounded by the mists of the mountains is a face that makes Marina tremble and shrink: "Holy Mother of God, a ghost!"

For it is the countenance of her foster father, old Tomasso Monaldi, whom everyone had thought dead from the night of her wedding.

But now the goblin recognises her; it cries: "Marina! daughter of my heart! you have come to succour your poor old hunted down Tomasso," and sinking on his knees, it catches the half fainting girl's hand, and kisses it reverently.

"You, alive, dear old Tomasso? Impossible!" half shudders, half sobs the girl, sinking down beside the spirit and looking into his deep, dark eyes that gleam so lovingly upon her.

"Two weeks ago, on the morning of the tragedy, De Belloc's soldiers reported to that officer in my presence that they'd killed you," says Barnes, impressively.

"Bah!" sneers the ghost; "the sergeant, I suppose, told his officer they shot me. The soldiers fired. It was easier for me to fall down behind a granite boulder than stand up and let them shoot again, though it was the darkness of the early morning. Then I came up on the mountain here, and fearing the soldiers would again pursue me, I have been a hermit, descending at night to the lower valleys to garner chickens and steal sheep."

"Holy smoke," grins the American, "here's the fellow for whose death they have vendettaed me, *alive and talking!*"

CHAPTER XIII

"GLORIOUS BANDITS"

THE storm fairly howls about them, but Marina forgets it as Tomasso half sobs: "Your coming here, dear mistress, shows you forgive me for the killing of the Englishman, your husband, the one who murdered Antonio in the duel," and the flickering light revealing Barnes's face, he exclaims: "The American who saw your brother slain. Ah, now you agree with me this accursed Anstruther's death was just."

"Thank God, you didn't murder him!" cries the girl. "Your stiletto entered the heart of Musso Danella, who deserved death for his lies."

"*I* killed poor Musso Danella?" stammers the old Corsican. Then he mutters as if he can't believe: "No, no, I heard his groan as I struck through the curtains."

"'Twas the groan of Musso Danella," answers Marina. "That you killed the right man proves my husband innocent. 'Twas the hand of God directed you." The girl's voice is very reverent.

"Then if it was the hand of God, Danella's death is sure proof your husband killed not Antonio," says

Tomasso solemnly, making the sign of the cross; but again breaks forth: "No, no—the proofs Musso gave to both you and me made us believe this Anstruther, your spouse, shot your brother. The things he held up to our very eyes——"

"Were the property of another English officer—one killed in action on a British warship under the Egyptian guns at Alexandria! Do you think I'd live in the arms of a man with my brother's blood upon him?" cries the young wife fervidly.

"No, that is not possible, also," agrees old Monaldi.

"But," interjects Barnes, "while you jabber here, your darling mistress dies of cold."

"Oh, my heart is warm enough with joy at seeing Tomasso live to make me forget the icy wind," and the enthusiastic girl, careless of her station, kisses the rugged face of her old servitor.

"Nevertheless, I have not forgotten supper," suggests the common-sense American, and half drags Marina into the cabin. "Eating first and affection afterward."

Here, as they warm themselves before the fire, Tomasso remarks: "I have little to offer you, dear mistress, but some dried sheep's flesh."

"Pish! hunger is nothing. You are alive, dear old Tomasso," repeats the girl, as he again mumbles her hand. Still the young lady's eyes seem happier

when Barnes, opening his haversack, throws out cans of preserved meats, potted chicken and tinned biscuits; also tea and coffee and tin cups and plates. These being followed by a box of cigars, the American emits a snort of joy, and remarks: "Little Lebœuf is a genius."

Immediately all together they go to work to make a mountain supper. Tomasso bringing the water from the melting snow outside the cabin, and Barnes brewing the tea and heating the soup, while Marina, her sleeves rolled up to her white, dimpled elbows, arranges their fare with woman's tact.

Soon after, as they eat, Barnes remarks: "This is a mighty curious coincidence. Do you know, old Tomasso, that Saliceti, the young politician here, the one who is to marry your daughter, Etheria, has sworn a vendetta against me for putting the troops on your track and getting you shot to death?"

"A vendetta against you? Well, it was his duty, seeing he is to marry my daughter, had your soldiers killed me," returns the old Corsican, in his simple way.

A moment after, however, he chuckles to himself: "*Per Dio*, that was what Rochini and Romano wanted me to do to-day—I was to kill you."

"Those awful monsters," shudders Marina.

"What makes you think that, Monaldi?" asks Barnes, surprise upon his face.

"Well, this Rochini, and his mate, have been run out of Rotondo, the farmers there having got tired of their sheep disappearing too rapidly, and have come over to this mountain. To-day these two approached me some four hours ago and said: 'Brother bandit out of a job, join us. A messenger has been sent ahead and we are going down to help Saliceti make votes for himself by killing the Americano down in the vale toward Guagno.'"

"Hum! then you did not accept," remarks Barnes, lighting his cigar.

"I am not quite bandit enough to shoot a man I have never heard of before," answers old Monaldi proudly, "so I said: 'No.' 'Ah, but he will have gold with him,' cried Rochini. 'Foreigners always have gold,' said Romano, and the two went on their way. They are down the valley now."

"That is not all of it," says Barnes earnestly. "Your loved mistress—her life is in danger, too."

"Not by those or any other men while I, Tomasso, am alive," answers the old man savagely.

"No, but by Cipriano Danella, Musso's brother, and the scar-eyed young man, Musso's nephew."

"Oh, yes; I know them both. They—they threaten her?" The old Corsican gazes with love and reverence upon the being he adores. "Threaten her—these people?" he exclaims vindictively.

"Yes, because your stiletto killed Musso, they say

she plotted with you for his murder, so as to save her husband," remarks Barnes, puffing his cigar.

"What, when she shrieked to me not to strike through the curtains. Ah, but I have something to say to Musso's relatives! Where are they? Down in the village I will find them. For myself I feared and hid from the gendarmes, but now, be not afraid." He dotingly pats Marina's tresses with his wrinkled hand. "And my friend, Saliceti, whom I once voted for, who is to marry my Etheria—if he is with them, I will have a word with Saliceti, and should he not prove pliable Etheria must get another for husband. Girls should not marry corpses, and Saliceti will be dead." As if the matter is ended, old Monaldi fills a battered cherrywood pipe with the strong, bitter, native tobacco of the island, lights it and goes to puffing contentedly.

"Neither of the Danellas is in Corsica," remarks Barnes. "The danger will come to your mistress when she returns to her husband on the French mainland. But Saliceti has abducted my wife and brought her here—so that I, following him, shall come to my death in Bocognano."

"Pah, nothing will come to your wife to-night," says old Monaldi. "Girls picking wild strawberries were talking that the day after to-morrow the people vote. They have a meeting this evening in Bocognano. I listened from behind a rock and heard

them, but when I put out my head the children screamed: 'Rochini' and ran frightened from me. I was so anxious to get word to my daughter Etheria that she should bring me clothes and food."

But Barnes is not so easy about his captured bride; he steps out of the cabin and finds the wind has died away, the mist has cleared with the rapidity usual to mountain storms. He is looking down through the clear night air on the lights of Bocognano, gleaming at his feet in the valley of the Gravona amid the chestnut groves.

He steps in and says anxiously to Marina: "The evening is very clear. You know my anguish—do you think you have strength to venture down the heights, assisted by Tomasso and me, and enter your own village?"

"Certainly, I am refreshed. Another cup of tea and I will go with you," cries the girl so eagerly that Barnes puts grateful eyes upon her, for he knows it is her spirit more than her strength that produces her assent to further journey.

They are making hurried preparations to leave the cabin. Barnes is bending over the fire, brewing Marina's tea—their guns, and even the American's revolvers are lying in their belt on the pile of boughs near the entrance. Tomasso is saying: "Will I not astonish the men who swore a vendetta against you

for my death! I who am alive and—and——" when suddenly Tomasso stops. There is a rattle in his throat that causes Barnes to look hurriedly up. Marina has retreated to the corner of the cabin and Monaldi's eyes are full of horror.

Just across the fire from him stand two dark mountaineers. Rough, undressed sheepskins cover their brawny shoulders; long guns are in their hands and stilettos in their belts. One is a big, powerful-looking ruffian; the other slighter, but his brown limbs lithe and sinewy. The eyes of both are shining malevolently in the blaze.

"*Corpo di diavolo*, this is a rare catch you have made, hermit bandit, whose name we do not know," chuckles the bigger of the two men; "this Americano whose pockets Saliceti declared were lined with gold, he whom we waited for and missed in the vale below."

"Ah, you are Rochini and Romano, I believe, from your speech, gentlemen," says Barnes quietly.

"Aye, that we are. And who is this woman of the beautiful eyes? Hand thy captives over to us, hermit bandit. Divide your spoils with us and we will save you the trouble of cutting the man's throat," jeers the slighter miscreant.

"As for the woman, the fire tells me she is very lovely both as to limbs and face, and I have a better use for her," guffaws the bigger man.

And never was Marina more beautiful. She steps forward, her lithe limbs, despite her strait, bearing her erect. Her eyes, though full of tears, for she is thinking of Edwin, are falchion eyes. She confronts the ruffians with undaunted mien, and says commandingly: "Fellows, dare to lay your hands on me and the whole of Bocognano will hunt you down. The Bellacoscia will destroy you. I am Marina Paoli."

"Oh, she is merry with us, this girl who runs after foreign gentlemen. Now we will show her that Corsican kisses are as good as those of this Americano."

Brutally they draw near to her. As the girl draws back from the contaminating clasp of the monsters, Tomasso, with a savage cry, and uplifted stiletto, stands between.

In a second the old man will be dead under their knives and the brave girl their prey. Marina's undaunted eyes, turning in appeal to the American, see with astonishment that he makes no move to aid her, but is abjectly squirming toward the cabin door. Suddenly she utters a gasp of despair and a sigh of contempt; this great pistol shot is running timidly away, flying out of the cabin, though as he passes the pile of boughs he seizes the belt holding his two revolvers.

"He has the gold! After him!" cries Rochini.

"We'll knife him in a minute!" yells Romano,

and the two, cocking their guns, fly after the dastard American.

But as they reach the door, the moment their athletic forms are outlined by the blaze of the fire, two quick, sharp pistol reports come from the outside, and Rochini and Romano, without even a cry, fall to the earth, inert and dead.

The smoke of Barnes's revolvers issues from them as he quietly re-enters and says apologetically: "I knew I wouldn't have time to grab my guns and shoot before they'd knife me, so I imitated the trick of Jerry, the Denver barkeeper, and ran away till I could get my weapons ready."

A moment later he says: "Come!" and taking Marina carefully in his arms, whispers: "Turn your face from them," and steps over the dead men lying in the entrance of the cabin.

Behind him, Tomasso, following, carrying the American's rifle, is saying: "Oh, you will be worshipped in this commune for this. So many poor men have been butchered, so many poor women have been carried away to the mountains by these dead devils."

But the reports have drawn others to the spot. As Barnes steps over the dead men lying in the entrance of the cabin, he suddenly says: "By Heaven, here are more of them!" puts Marina down and would draw his revolvers were he not seized by

three athletic young fellows who rise silently from the shadows about them.

A clear, commanding voice remarks: "Not more of Rochini and his fellows. You have saved us the trouble of their killing. We are the Bellacoscia. Your pistols, stranger, have relieved us of the execution of these ruffians we were pursuing, who have brought discredit on the honoured name of bandit."

And Tomasso is crying "Antonio Bonelli," to a man of noble bearing, who, carbine in hand, comes into the cabin followed by eight stalwart young men, all armed as he is.

But the eight stalwart young men fear the supernatural and stand back, their eyes gleaming, and one shudders: "'Tis the ghost of old Monaldi, killed by De Belloc's troopers two weeks ago." For a moment they would retreat, but their leader laughs at them: "'Tis flesh and blood that is kissing my hand."

And old Tomasso says: "You know how well the troopers shoot. Do you think they'd hit a man at two hundred yards hiding behind a rock in the gloom of the morning?"

To this young Angoni, the nephew of his leader, sneers: "I know how well the soldiers shoot. They fired at me twice the other day," and he and his comrades gather round Monaldi and slap him on the back and cry: "Bravo, old Tomasso! You're one of us now!"

But the flashing-eyed man orders: "Stand back, while I question this stranger who has done Bocognano a service to-night."

Marina has risen, murmuring: "Antonio Bonelli!"

"*Gran Dio!* Mademoiselle Paoli," says the man, and gallantly sinks upon his knee and kisses devotedly the fair hand the girl extends to him. After a moment he continues most emphatically: "It was with sorrow that Corsica heard that you had forgotten the oath of the vendetta in the arms of the English officer who killed your brother."

"That was not so," cries Marina. "The English officer who shot Antonio fell under the Egyptian guns by the hand of God. The man I love is free of any blood stain."

"Ah, the murderer of your brother fell by the hand of God. It is well. And this cavalier, is he your husband?"

"Oh, no; he is an American against whom foul wrong has been done by Saliceti," and introducing Barnes she says: "Tell this great bandit your story and he will give you justice. He has done so often in Bocognano."

Briefly the American relates the kidnapping of his wife, and listening to this, the Corsican says: "No outrage against woman was ever perpetrated in Bocognano without my avenging her, and this crime

against a strange lady—ah, the hospitality of the island forbids it. So young Saliceti thinks by proclaiming a vendetta against you for the death of a man who *lives*, that he will gain votes in our commune. *Basta*, I have something to say as to the elections down there. They are holding a meeting in the municipal to-night. Descend with me to the village, Americano, who has done such a great service in the slaying of these miscreants, who have dishonoured our noble calling, and we, the Bellacoscia, will give your bride back to you and right your wrong."

"*Dio mio*," cries Marina excitedly. "Now that our glorious bandits love you, Burton, your wrongs will be righted!"

"This is the first place in which I ever liked bandits," mutters Barnes enthusiastically.

CHAPTER XIV

BEFORE A CORSICAN ELECTION

Escorted by the mountaineers, two stalwart young men carrying Mademoiselle Paoli reverently down the dizzy path, they skirt the dread precipices of Del Oro and passing the vinelands and the clearings, come into the main road leading from Corte, then descending the hill are in the chestnut groves of Bocognano.

At a signal from their chief, the party pauses and some of the young men go forward to see no gendarmes are in the place.

Then their leader, who has been conversing with Barnes, apologising for Saliceti's outrage on Corsican hospitality, turns to Marina and says: "Have no fear, Signora; your English sister shall be returned to this gentleman, but——" he lays his hand on Barnes's shoulder—"use not the weapons I see at your belt. Thy quarrel shall be my quarrel. No foreigner shall ever be compelled to protect a woman while I, Antonio Bonelli, dominate Bocognano."

"Were it not meeting night, everything would

be silent save the dogs and pigs," chuckles Tomasso. "Now they'll have light enough to see I am alive."

"*Cospetto,* they are making a *fête* for you, Monaldi," laughs one of the young men, for lanterns are dangling from the overhanging boughs of the main street of the little village; some of the houses are illuminated, and round the communal building and the wine shops are gathered many men.

The young Bellacoscia soon return and report that no gendarmes are in sight.

"Silence!" commands the chief. "I'll do the talking for all."

"Just keep me away from Saliceti, so I won't kill him," remarks Barnes, and the little party tramp through the lantern-lighted streets, and coming to the door of the municipal building, the loungers who are smoking their pipes make way for them, doffing their hats and saying with great reverence: "The Bellacoscia!"

Near the entrance are two illuminated placards, one reading: "Vote for Saliceti, who upholds old Corsica!" The other: "Cast your ballots for Bernardo, the man who kills!"

Surrounded by the young men, Tomasso in the dim light is not noticed, and Marina has drawn her *mandile* close about her face.

The party enter the low hall of the municipal, which is lighted by lamps and decorated by myrtles

and cyclamen flowers. It is well filled by a crowd of farmers, peasants, wool growers and shepherds; also a few of the gentry of the neighbourhood, both cavaliers and ladies who wish to hear the fiery eloquence of Saliceti, are in the gallery. These are now being fervidly addressed by young Bernardo himself.

Catching sight of the commanding figure of the great bandit, the adroit politician bursts out rapturously: "Ah, thanks, grand Antonio Bonelli, for thy presence and countenance. You have come to say to me, 'Bernardo, you are a true Corsican; in you is upheld the honoured custom of the vendetta to the twentieth generation.' So will all here say when to-morrow I shall have the body of the one who came to Marina's nuptials and left death behind him, this American who brought with him soldiers to shoot down poor old Tomasso Monaldi. For it, I, loving his daughter Etheria, have sworn the blood feud; and I remember my words. I am a Corsican with a dagger!"

But the savage shouts that greet this are stilled by old Tomasso, who pushes through the crowd and stands facing the platform, his eyes flashing, and says: "I, Tomasso Monaldi, tell you there is no cause of a vendetta for me, *because I am alive!*"

At his words shuddering cries of "Ghost!" "Spirit!" "Spectre!" rise amid the tobacco smoke of the meeting, and some would slip from the door

did not Antonio Bonelli command: "Let all remain!" as three of his stalwart descendants bar the entrance.

"*Diavolo*, Monaldi's spirit comes to bless my vendetta!" shouts Saliceti, though his eyes are wild and his voice almost incoherent, and his knees tremble slightly, as do those of many others, for mediæval superstitions still exist in Corsica, among them that of ghosts, spirits and goblins.

But there is a sudden cry: "Father!" from a girl in black *mandile* and deep mourning who has been sitting with some other women in the retirement of a corner of the hall, listening to her lover's ferocious eloquence, and Etheria, with streaming eyes, is in Monaldi's arms.

"Aye, 'tis flesh and blood you're fondling, girl," laughs the great bandit, and striding to the platform he says in ringing tones: "But this is not all!" for now the crowd are gathered about Tomasso and are greeting him with words of sympathy because for the mere killing of a man, he had been forced to take to the *macchia* and become a bandit.

"Attention, all!" commands Antonio. "Listen to my words. If not, my followers shall give sharper notice to you!" And the crowd wisely becomes still.

"In pursuit of your suffrages, Saliceti has put a base outrage on our hospitality," continues the ban-

dit chief in solemn tones. "He has abducted a young English lady and brought her to Bocognano to lure to death her husband, an American Signore who shoots well enough to be a bandit and who this night, with his own weapons, has slain Rochini and Romano, whose murders have made you all tremble as you went along mountain paths and whose outrages have caused our maids to have nightmares."

"Rochini and Romano dead? Impossible!" cries a shepherd, as a sigh of relief and then a yell of gratitude rises from the concourse.

"I saw him shoot the ruffians to death upon Del Oro, I, Antonio Bonelli. Don't dare say no!" This last is addressed to Saliceti, who, having recovered from his astonishment, is about to open his mouth.

"Ah, you admit it. *Maladetta*, where is the English lady?"

And Saliceti, being admonished to answer by a quick prick of the stiletto from a Bellacoscia youth who has stepped behind him, the young politician falters forth: "No harm has come to her. She is with my mother."

On this Barnes has looked from a distance, wisely reflecting that his battle is being fought for him, but with difficulty restraining his hands from putting a pistol ball through Saliceti. He now cries:

"Then, for God's sake, take me to her quick!"

This brings upon him the attention of the crowd.

Learning that it is he who has relieved them of the terror of Rochini, the men cry "*Viva!*" and embrace him, and a little girl steals up to him and timidly kisses his hand.

"Your lady shall receive you soon, Signore Barnes," remarks Bonelli. "I would like you to see Corsican justice," and at some words from him two or three of the young men having left the hall on his errand, the hawk-eyed bandit continues: "Besides, I fear common report has done wrong to the lady of our town. Marina, child, step here and make your friends love you again."

To this time, she having stood in the shadows of the rear and the lamplight of the room being very dim, in their excitement the concourse had not noticed her; but as Marina steps forward, some men turn away, a woman whispers: "'Tis a pity the blood of Pasquale Paoli flows in her," and a young cavalier remarks: "We honoured your wedding, Madame Anstruther, but then we did not know that you had forgotten your oath of the vendetta and were mating with the slayer of your brother."

"*Gaspardo!*" cries Marina, with a gasp of horror, "my childhood's friend, how dare you say this lie?" and staggering onto the platform, and seeing condemnation, horror and disgust in the faces she had known from childhood, the girl simply but with great nobility of manner, tells them how Musso

Danella, inspired by devilish jealousy, had turned the articles in a dead man's trunk into evidence that the English officer whom she had nursed to life in the Egyptian hospitals and whom she loved with her whole heart, was the principal in the duel at Ajaccio, the man who had slain her brother. The tears are coursing down her cheeks, her mobile features quivering, but her eyes are flashing as she cries: "Know you Marina Paoli so little as not to know that the one thing that could stay the vendetta in her was the death of the man against whom she had taken its solemn oath. But he was killed by the Egyptians beneath the guns of Alexandria! What else would take him from my vengeance save the hand of God? Am I not Corsican as well as you? Then why not wish me joy of my wedding a noble gentleman who will come among you and be one of you!

"*Miséricorde!*" she sighs, "must a daughter of Paoli's beg your love—and not receive it?" Her white arms are imploring.

The beauty of the suppliant, with the blood of the great Corsican patriot flowing in her veins, touches their passionate hearts. A lady from the little balcony seizing some of the cyclamen decorations, throws the flowers all over her, and her compatriots, whose faces had been cold to her, fly around, embrace her and beg her to forgive them.

"But there is one I will not forgive," cries the girl sternly; "this Saliceti, Bernardo, who had known me in my youth, who spread these reports all over the mountains that I have disgraced my very womanhood in giving myself to my brother's murderer."

"*A bas Saliceti!*" yells a sheep farmer from the valley.

"*Demonios*, his lies have dishonoured our race!" growls a goatherd from the slopes of La Pintica.

"Leave him to us," says Bonelli calmly; his hawk's eyes are fixed unpleasantly on the candidate, who with muttered anathemas is edging from the platform.

With this, Corsica's favourite bandit commands sternly: "Men of Bocognano, no one of you will cast your ballot at the polls for this politician who has disgraced our village. Otherwise you will hear from me. You remember how right there by his ballot box I bound in his official chair our rascal mayor who had issued marked ballots, and then when you came in to deposit them in the official voting urn, pricked by my stiletto, Signore Mayor was compelled to implore you all to tear up the marked ballots and vote *against* him. You will vote this time for Signore Ambrose Lucitano, the cigarette-smoking statesman from Ajaccio, who begs your suffrages. He may be a greater fool, but he is not so great a

rascal as our fellow townsman! Don't you even dare vote for yourself!" he cries, as the abashed Saliceti flies from the room pursued by jeers and execrations and even the taunts of his own sweetheart, who is still clasped in old Tomasso's arms.

"Now, reparation to you, Signore Barnes, the only one we can make. We will bear you in honour to Marina's home, where your bride now awaits you. Your wedding *fête* was postponed in Nice, I understand," the grim man smiles slightly. "We will give you in Bocognano a nuptial procession to a bride whose lips are as unsullied as when she made vows to you."

So, attended by the whole of the Bellacoscia and many girls, who have pulled down the floral ornaments of the communal room, waving the flowers about him, and young men shooting off their guns in his honour, Barnes, with Marina on his arm, is escorted beneath the lantern-lighted chestnut trees to the old mansion of the Paolis. As they pass along the main street a girl comes running from the telegraph office and places an envelope in Marina's hand. After glancing at it, a wild elation is in the young wife's face. She whispers some hurried directions to old Tomasso, and tripping to Barnes's side her step is as buoyant as his.

The American, walking very fast and thinking of Enid, scarce notices it.

They are soon at the doors of the country house, which are being thrown open by some of Marina's old servants. The great bandit bows and says laughingly:

"You seem to be in a hurry, Signore. Your meeting with your abducted bride should be a private one. I do not wonder at your eagerness." Barnes has already turned to the house. "My young men who conducted your lady from Saliceti's tell me she is of most marvellous beauty, though somewhat overcome by fatigue and anxiety for you and bashfulness. We take our leave, deadly pistol shot, but will watch over you and your spouse to see that no harm comes to you."

Then, it being whispered that the enraged Saliceti has notified the gendarmes by telegraph that the Bellacoscia have come down from the mountain, the illustrious bandit and his followers silently disappear in the shadows of the night.

During these words Mrs. Anstruther has hurriedly gone into her house. Barnes now, with the eagerness of happy love upon his face, runs up onto the verandah and steps into the hallway.

Here he is met by Marina. "Don't be too impatient," she observes, smiling slightly. "I haven't seen your wife, but she is upstairs in her chamber, the great front room on the second floor. Though perfectly well, my servants say, she is worn out by

the constant excitement and anxiety of the last twenty-four hours."

"Yes, I can understand that. The front room on the second floor, you said," whispers Burton, and turns to spring up the great oaken stairway to the upper story.

"You are in a great hurry," says Marina, laying a light hand upon his arm. "You will hardly be coming down for some little time and in two minutes I shall be on my way to Bastia, so I will have to bid you good-by now."

"To Bastia?" queries Barnes, turning to her, astonishment in his face.

"Yes, I shall see my husband to-morrow morning," she remarks, in joyous excitement. "Here is a telegram from Edwin telling me he will be in Bastia by noon. I must meet him there. Everything in the house is yours, dear Burton. I know you will be as happy here with your bride, as I shall be with my husband. Ah, Tomasso is already at the door."

For at this moment there is a noise of wheels and hoofs upon the avenue.

"Better wait for the diligence to-morrow," dissents Barnes.

"And keep Edwin waiting for my kisses? No, no, Tomasso shall drive me toward Bastia through the night. Besides, going by the diligence, at the post-stations there will be gendarmes, and my foster

father is still a fugitive. It will be best that Edwin and I take him out of Corsica entirely. I have given orders to my servants—make this place your home as long as you like." She has already stepped out upon the porch.

"You had better see Enid first," remarks Burton, following her.

"No, I think not. Your interview should be before mine and I haven't time. The drive to Bastia is so long." The eager lady has already gone down a step or two.

"You will be too fatigued," almost entreats the American, though the thought of being left entirely alone with his bride for the first days of his honeymoon causes his dissent to be rather languid.

"No, no, the journey to meet my husband, knowing that I can tell him that Bocognano still loves me and that there is no hatred for him in the hearts of my people and my kindred, will be a pleasant one. 'Tis a happy night, Mr. Barnes. Give this kiss to dear Enid." In her romantic, excited way, the charming young lady kisses her new brother-in-law and runs down to her country carriage driven by Tomasso and pulled by a couple of black, wiry, Arab-limbed native horses.

The carriage has been filled full of the sweet-scented cyclamen flowers by the peasant girls. The branches of these thrown upon her at the political

meeting Marina also carries in her hand. "I shall show the flowers to Edwin to prove that my village forgives him," she whispers proudly as Barnes hurriedly puts her into the vehicle. "May you be happy as I am," she calls to him, and the young Corsican wife is driven rapidly down the great avenue of chestnut trees, Tomasso being apparently also, eager to leave the gendarmes that have hunted him over the mountains.

CHAPTER XV

A LITTLE SURPRISE FOR MR. BARNES

Scarce waiting for this, the American springs up the steps into the house again, and rapidly ascending the stairway to the second floor, sees a very faint gleam of light shining under the doorway of the great guest chamber in the front of the old Corsican mansion.

He knocks almost reverently, and a faint sweet voice answers timidly: "Come in."

His heart lighted by hope and love, his whole form trembling with anxiety to take his bride within his arms, the thought that she is his and safe making his flashing eyes very tender, the eager bridegroom opens the door.

Reclining on a lounge in a white robe whose undulations outline the exquisite figure, her head bashfully turned from him, the long, beautiful, almost dishevelled hair streaming over her shining shoulders, is his rescued bride.

She is in a nook of the big room well from the faint candle light.

To her he steps reverently and whispers: "My

poor darling; you are overcome with the terrible fatigues, miseries and anxieties of this wretched day, that has now become a happy evening."

Without waiting for an answer, the love of his heart coming in him, he passes an arm about her slender waist and kisses her passionately. Her lips respond as sweetly and clingingly as ever did those of a young bride.

But even in the midst of the kiss, Barnes starts back with a sharp, amazed cry of almost horror: "My God, *Sally Blackwood!*"

And the lady turning to him so that the candle light shines upon her radiant features that are almost laughing, says archly: "Yes, I'm all here, La Belle Blackwood. It is a little surprise, is it not, my ardent bridegroom, Mr. Barnes of New York?"

"My Heaven, how did you come here?" Burton's voice is hoarse with amazement.

"How? In Cipriano's swift yacht and afterward on a Corsican pony."

"And why?" An awful anxiety has crept into his voice.

"Why? To save your life!"

"To save my life?" Burton's tone is incredulous.

"Yes. I guessed from Cipriano that they were luring you to Corsica for your death. I came here to warn you. Besides, I said I'd have one kiss from you, that farewell kiss you wouldn't give me the

other evening at the Hôtel de la Mediterranée. You should have been kinder to me for old times' sake, Burton, and not quite forced me to hate you or—love you—I don't know which."

"And Mr. Ruggles?" remarks Barnes, still astounded.

"Oh, Ruggles came up and quarrelled with me; got jealous of you or Cipriano, I don't know which. Besides, I wanted to send him back to his wife. I like to do some good things, so I gave him his *congé*. I was tired of Dan. Then bizarre Cipriano, he is so funny—he said to me: '*Ma chére*, you want to even yourself with Barnes of New York?' I had told him you were such a gallant knight you wouldn't even kiss an old sweetheart because you were going to be married to a pretty-faced, fair-haired, blue-eyed English ingenue, and so, at Cip's suggestion, I came over to Corsica by Cipriano's fast yacht yesterday. He is very rich, Cip is, I am told. That doesn't make me think any the worse of him."

"But where is Enid and by what devil's chance did you take my bride's place?" asks Barnes; then breaks out: "Ah, it is impossible!" And mutters almost tremblingly: "Her letter on the yacht."

"Oh, the Corsicans—they wanted you to follow them. They expected that. They didn't intend for you to get your bride, at all events not until you had given them several chances to kill you. So I was

on the shore at Sagone waiting for them when Saliceti arrived per schedule on the *Seagull.* I saw them from a distance. They brought your bride off the yacht all right. Great Scott, she has a fine nerve, that young lady of yours. Haughty as a captured goddess."

"By the Eternal, have they killed her?" Barnes is white to the lips.

"Oh, not yet anyway. *Diable,* how you must love her. It is the first time I've ever seen you lose your *sang-froid,* and now cool-headed Mr. Barnes is trembling.

"Saliceti, with two friends, hurried her on a long way ahead of me through the mountains. Some dark-eyed gentleman escorting me gave you a distant chance to see us. You were never on the same road as your wife after you left Vico—you were pursuing *me!*"

"My God!"

"It was such an exciting affair," she half laughs; "something so out of the ordinary, an adventure so bizarre that I liked to do it. Word was brought you were in pursuit up the mountain path. I knew they wanted to ambush you. So I told a shepherd to give you warning at the inn of Guagno. I hope you got it. I knew your divine pistol shooting and said to myself: '*Ma foi,* with American luck and American pluck, he's sure to have the best of it. Then

Burton will pursue, thinking me his bride, and if his wife gets out of the clutches of the Corsican gentry, for her to read how her husband of ten minutes chased day and night and rescued La Belle Blackwood in the Corsican mountains, will be a pill not sugar-coated for the immaculate Enid. Divorces have been brought about by less than this!' Oho, swearing! 'Tis not polite in a lady's presence." She gazes roguishly about the old-fashioned, dimly lighted chamber, whose faint candle flames seem to etherealise her exquisite yet piquant loveliness of face and form that had made her the rage among the men of Paris, the envy of its women.

"Devil!"

"No, not devil. Don't call me that," she implores almost wildly. "I am only La Belle Blackwood—as God made me—and—men, too."

"Where did they take my wife?

"That I shall not tell you—at least, not without a bribe. Shall I have a farewell kiss for the information?"

"Never!"

"Oh, Burton, don't kill me!" she gasps, for Barnes's hand, in his agony and rage, is nearly on her white throat.

"Pish, you are not worth it."

Then if ever the shortcomings of youth come home to a man of the world, these do to Barnes, as the

woman almost hysterically lashes him with the torture of recollection. "No, but I am worth a kiss; at least, you used to think so," she whispers sympathetically. "Don't you remember the time when you were all in all to me. Think of that! Think how, but a little over three weeks ago, you practically drove me from the hotel at Monte Carlo so that I could not sully the innocent lips of Miss Enid Anstruther with mine. Think when I sent for you to warn you to save your life in Nice only two nights since, how when I begged, 'Just a farewell kiss, Burton,' you turned away and said your immaculate fiancée wouldn't like it; that you had determined to do nothing that would give her pain. Weren't you giving *me* pain? Don't you think *I* felt it? Don't you imagine you owe some reparation to me for the days when you were a boy in Paris, and I steered you through the meshes of the gay French capital and kept you harmless from all other women—*because I loved you?*"

To this Barnes dares not reply; he remembers.

"Ah, you despise me too much to answer," she sobs. Then she suddenly cries: "But I forgive even that!" for now into La Belle Blackwood has come the reckless spirit that makes her more dangerous than even her beauty—that desire to have what she must not—to enjoy the fruit that is forbidden. "You men of the world ape the saint for a

little time when you become husbands of beautiful innocence, but it never lasts," she pleads. "You will sow your wild oats again after a little time. Why not sow a second crop now. For an hour or two imagine you are as you were the first time I met you —that *petite souper* at the Café des Anglais—when your boy's eyes first looked into mine." Her white arms that princes have longed for in vain close around him; she clings to him, sighing: "Then afterward I'll tell you how to find her."

Uncompromisingly he tears himself from her and commands: "Tell me where I will find her now; tell me so that I can go back to her and dare to kiss my wife's lips, knowing that I am true to her. Think —think what you once were when your father and mother in Ohio loved you and believed in their little girl. By Heaven, I know there is good in you, Sally —only let it come out, just this time," he entreats. "Just tell me where I can find my darling, so that I can rescue her in time, for you know these are villains who have stolen her from me."

A being of impulse, La Belle Blackwood wrings her hands, her head droops and she sobs: "Then, Burton, I'll forgive you and tell you. There is a little good in me—I'll tell you all I know of your bride, which is very little. I think the road they took her was north of the path that we followed. But where Enid is, I know not."

"Then Saliceti! I'll tear it from him."

"I hardly think he can tell you. His followers were strangely frightened and embarrassed when the Bellacoscia young men demanded your bride from them, and as an evasion, substituted me." Then, noting the fearful look on Barnes's face, she cries: "Don't waste your time here; ask the man who knows."

"Ah!"

"Cipriano Danella! The head of this affair didn't want you to find her—not until they killed you, if it were possible. Oh, this Corsican Count who is playing with you is a great man—not a boy."

"Cipriano Danella," ejaculates Barnes; then turns to her and questions sternly:

"This is all you can tell me? Is it the truth?"

"Yes, as God will never forgive me—yes."

"Very well," says Barnes, "I thank you for the information. I will now see that you get out of Corsica safely.

"How?"

"My friend, the great Bellacoscia, will do it for me."

"The great bandit! He will take me from Corsica? *Diable*, the magnificent bandit—that would be an adventure," laughs the volatile lady airily. "The ferocious bandit I have read of! This Bellacoscia who kills gendarmes as if they were flies!

That's greater than even a pork packer, a cattle man or a Count Danella, isn't it? I thank you for the bandit, Mr. Barnes. Besides, I thank you for the first kiss after you swore to the minister to love and cleave to Enid Anstruther. Don't tell your bride; she would not like it. Mr. Barnes of New York."

With a muttered groaning oath, Barnes runs down the stairs, her airy laugh pursuing him through the old hallway of the Corsican house.

He steps out upon the porch. The great oaks had seemed romantic to him when he entered; the vines climbing up the balustrades had appeared poetical, the grand mountains tipped with snow under the soft southern moonlight had inspired him by their beauty. Now all is a hideous blank to him. He mutters: "Cipriano Danella," and asks: "My God, where is she?"

A happy-faced young man with elated air and dust-covered clothes is spurring hastily up the avenue, a native boy trotting beside him. Seeing the American, he calls out: "Glad to hear you and Enid are again yardarm to yardarm; though you look lovesick enough, Barnes of New York.

Awaking with a start, Burton looks at him and gasps: "Edwin, you here?"

"Easy enough. I found a letter left with Lady Chartris's housekeeper by my wife to be delivered to

me this morning, which told me Marina had come to Bocognano. So I rushed into Nice. By good luck I found Alingham's yacht was coming straight to Ajaccio. For my sake he put on steam. I made the twenty-five miles up here from the Corsican capital on a horse, arriving before they extinguished the lights in the inn. There they told me of my noble wife and how Marina's words had banished our vendetta from Bocognano."

This is spoken as he springs off the horse, tosses the bridle to the boy, and runs up the stairs. "Marina is inside, I imagine," he says, and calls through the doorway: "You needn't hide from me, dear one, though I was mighty angry at your desertion."

A silvery laugh from up the stairs greets him, but he turns back and asks: "Whose laugh is that? It's not that of my wife!" and gazing into Barnes's statue-like face, with its awful gleaming eyes, growls: "Hang it, why don't you speak? What's the matter?"

"Marina left for Bastia over an hour ago."

"Why did she leave for Bastia?"

"A telegram," answers Barnes, "purporting to come from you stating that you would be at that place to-morrow morning. Notwithstanding her fatigue, she went on by carriage to meet you."

"A telegram? Impossible! Bastia is at the north

end of the island. I arrived at Ajaccio, the south end. Besides, I sent no telegram."

Edwin is interrupted by a short cry from Barnes: "Cipriano Danella!"

With an execration Anstruther asks hoarsely: "Do you think he has aught to do with this?"

"I am pretty certain of it. You do not realise that fellow's passion for——"

"For my wife? By Heaven, I'll kill him!" and the young English officer looks round to call the boy who has come with him, but the urchin, being eager for bed, is already out of hearing with the horse. Suddenly he cries: "Barnes, you're not going to leave Enid here unprotected," for the American is almost running down the avenue, Edwin after him.

"I haven't found my wife."

"The lady upstairs, whom I heard?"

"Was not Enid. It was that infernal La Belle Blackwood, and yet I forgive her, for she told me the direction she thought Enid had taken," and as they half trot, half stride down the avenue under the chestnut trees, Burton epitomises his adventures of the day.

"What are you going to do now?"

"Get horses and follow your wife. She is the one to which we have a clue. We must prevent her falling into Danella's hands. Perhaps—I pray God

—in following her we may find also the way to my wife."

"Why?"

"Because Cipriano is the real brains of this infernal outrage. He has the money of the affair. He loves your wife."

"Curse him!"

"I am sure of it by his eyes. When I get hold of him, he shall tell me where Enid is, or——" The American's face is as diabolical as that of an Apache Indian.

As they reach the gateway of the grounds they are abruptly intercepted. One of the young Bellacoscia, hidden in a tree, springs out to them, gun in hand, but recognising Mr. Barnes, the young man says: "I am one of those watching that no Saliceti troubles you. I let this man pass because I saw he was a foreigner."

"That's all right," replies Burton, "but could you show me the telegraph station and where to get horses?"

"Beside Hôtel Mouvrages in the main street is the telegraph station," answers the young man, "and a stable to hire horses is at the inn."

"Thank you. Also I want to see your chief, if he hasn't already gone to the mountains."

"Is it important?"

"Very."

"Then Signore Antonio will be here in a few minutes," answers the young fellow and speeds off through a neighbouring lane.

The two hurry to the inn; but Bocognano has gone to bed. Its houses are all unlighted, their doors are locked. In this land of the vendetta, even at the auberge, people hesitate to open for unknown travellers knocking on the portal.

There will be no chance to telegraph to Bastia or any way station on that road before to-morrow morning. It is nearly an hour before they succeed in arousing a somnolent hostler at the inn stables, who mutters all the horses are tired and must have a night's rest. But stimulated by a gold piece placed in his sleepy hand the man finally awakens sufficiently to saddle two horses, which he says are the liveliest of any in the stable.

On two sorry beasts they dash up to Marina's home and find waiting on its steps the great bandit and one or two of his men.

"I have a favour to ask you, Signore Bonelli, in addition to the others you have done me; that you will escort to the yacht at Sagone the lady within this house and get her safely out of Corsica."

"Oh, you needn't ask that, Mr. Barnes of New York," cries La Belle Blackwood, stepping airily onto the veranda. "I have already petitioned the great Bellacoscia, and I think he will protect me

against any man; won't you, Signore Bonelli?" The softness of her sweet voice is a caress.

She has donned a Corsican costume, the *mandile* decks her hair with exquisite grace, the clinging skirt displays the alluring outlines of her Venus form.

"*Sapristi*, will not I!" says the magnificent man, his hawk's eyes flashing as they look upon the loveliness of the entrancing American adventuress. "Count on Bonelli to his heart's blood." Then he asks moodily: "But why are you compelled to leave your wife, Signore Barnes?"

"This lady is not my wife."

"*Santa Maria*, not your wife! *Gran Dio*, whose spouse is she?"

"Nobody's."

"*Diavola suprema!*" cries the great bandit, a tremendous joy flying into his face. "And you—you leave this loveliness?" he adds, as if he cannot understand.

"Ah, you think the dress of your island becomes me?" asks the lady, playfully poking from beneath the short skirt a foot and ankle of such surpassing beauty that the great Antonio nearly gasps.

"Her loveliness is not mine, Signore Bonelli," remarks Burton, coldly. "Besides, it is a matter of life and death that calls me. This gentleman——" Barnes introduces Edwin—"is the husband of

Mademoiselle Paoli, who has been lured from here by a lying telegram to Bastia. We journey to protect her against a design upon her safety—upon even her honour. Lieutenant Anstruther, unused to the language, would be of little use."

"Design against the honour of the daughter of the Paoli!" snarls Bonelli. "Impossible! I will go with you upon this errand myself."

But the enchanting tones of Sally Blackwood make him pause; she is pleading: "What, and desert me among your wild mountains?"

"No, 'tis best I go not," remarks the bandit chief. "Gendarmes, with me in your company, would be an embarrassment, and they in their bungling way may doubtless aid you. And your wife, where is she, Signore Barnes?"

"Still in the hands of Saliceti or his friends."

"They did not surrender her as they agreed?"

"No. They substituted this lady."

"*Corpo di Diavolo*, Saliceti has tricked me! Saliceti has braved me! Saliceti has made me break my word to you, Signore Americano. For that—" the bandit raises his hand solemnly—"I proclaim a vendetta against Bernardo Eduardo Saliceti."

"Oh, don't do that!" half shrieks the beautiful La Blackwood. "Saliceti is so young and gallant. He only wishes to walk in the hall of the deputies."

But every entreaty of the exquisite creature for

the gallant young Saliceti seems to strangely inflame Bonelli's rage against him.

He remarks: "By all the Saints he shall walk in the halls of death!" and commands ferociously: "Young men of the Bellacoscia, remember this vendetta as you load your guns and sit by the mountain paths." Then his eyes grow strangely soft as he says almost caressingly to the piquant Blackwood: "Dry your eyes, petite, for young Saliceti," and laughs significantly: "*Dio mio*, there are other men than he in Corsica."

As they ride away, Barnes, gazing on the chief's enamored eyes, says grimly to Edwin: "The more the alluring Sally implores, the less chance for Saliceti. This ends the politician, I imagine. Now for the other!" and his eyes have a faraway gaze as the two in pursuit of Marina spur along the gloomy yet romantic road toward Corte and Bastia, the moonlit mountains on either side seeming to smile sadly on them.

CHAPTER XVI

ALONG THE CYCLAMEN PATH

Both young men are riding light; Barnes for this speedy dash has left his rifle and his field glasses behind him, and they gallop up the pass of the Force. But the ascent is so steep they are soon compelled to walk their horses. A precipice is on one side of them and the great flanks of Del Oro are on the other. Both Edwin and Burton have been silent, thinking of their wives. The latter now remarks, pointing to a deep gorge running up the mountain side: "That, I believe, leads to La Pintica, the home of the Bellacoscia, which the gendarmes never dare to visit."

"I wonder if the great bandit will take La Blackwood there?" observes Edwin, with a grimace that at a happier moment would be a smile.

But they having reached the summit of the Col, now speed their horses sharply down the declivities into the great forest of Vizzavona, the road leading them through pines, beeches and the inevitable chestnut trees.

They have passed no one in the darkness. In fact, they have not yet gone far enough to have any hope

of overtaking Marina unless accident has befallen her vehicle. Besides, her horses were fresh; theirs, according to the hostler, had been ridden during the preceding day.

Soon after, they dash through the village of Vivario, announced by the barking of some curs and the grunting of some pigs. "Every house in the village is closed and no one would open for us in the dead of night in this land of the vendetta," remarks Barnes.

They go to climbing again, and soon after descend through the gorge of the rapid Vecchio, the river foaming far beneath the road, while rocky hills and sharp mountains rise on either side. With the first light of the morning they ride through the hamlet of Serraggio.

Until this time Del Oro has always been with them. A glance over the shoulder and they see its white peak. Now it passes out of view. They have knocked at no doors; they have made no inquiries; they have only hurried on. But some hour after the red-tiled houses of Corte loom up before them and a few minutes later they jog their tired steeds up one of the principal streets of the central inland town of Corsica, the great Monte Rotondo now looking down upon them.

Above them are tall elm trees that catch the rays of the rising sun. Flanked on each side by white

stone, red-roofed houses, they pass between the hotels Pierracci and Paoli, almost deserted now, this being the beginning of the hot summer season. Along the street are many placards indicating the approaching election. Every time he sees the name of Saliceti, Barnes, compressing his lips, thinks of his lost darling.

At the Pierracci they learn from one of the waiters that a lady had paused to obtain a relay of horses, and he had brought out to her at her request a cup of coffee.

"Was she driven by an old man?" questions Edwin, hurriedly.

"Yes, with a beard like a bandit," answers the man with a grin. "The carriage was full of cyclamen flowers. You could smell them all over the street."

"It's your wife," whispers Barnes, giving the man a twenty-franc piece that makes him look almost as happy as this news does Anstruther.

"Only an hour ago! We will overtake Marina long before she reaches Bastia," cries Edwin.

Both men drink a cup of coffee and eat a little with almost gusto, for anxiety has partially left the face of Edwin, and Barnes hopes he may, by Marina, obtain a clue to the whereabouts of his bride. "Let Marina go on ahead of us after we catch sight of her," he says to Edwin, "and see what will happen

to her. It may give us some hint as to the location of Cipriano."

"Let's sight my wife first," answers the English sailor eagerly, and the two gallop on, fresh horses under them, now quite certain of overtaking Mrs. Anstruther.

They ride hurriedly, the road skirting the torrent of the foaming Vecchio until considerably over an hour after leaving Corte they reach Ponte-alla-Lecchio, where the big bridge crosses the river Golo. During this the horsemen note more signs of the coming casting of votes.

Some of the "Lucchese" workmen from Italy are throwing stones at an election placard that displeases them. "The pests from Lucca," mutters a Corsican shopkeeper as they buy a glass of wine from him, "are always riotous, and at election times batter every one's heads with stones—their own included. They've been here since sunrise fighting and brawling. I heard their shouts when I was in bed. But everyone pardons the 'Lucchese'; they do all our hard work," adds the man with a grin, pocketing the coin Edwin hands him.

But the wine shop keeper can tell them nothing of a woman travelling, and to their astonishment, though they make many inquiries, they hear of no lady in a carriage passing through the village this morning.

"It's quite possible," says Edwin to Barnes, "she didn't stop here. Her horses were fresh. She's gone on. No one has noticed her."

"That's very true," answers Burton, though his face grows more concerned and gloomy.

Therefore they ride rapidly along over the now well-kept road, which generally skirts the Golo. An hour or so later it abruptly reaches that region where the river spreads out in marsh and mere that gives Corsica the name of being unhealthy. Turning north, they spur on over the causeway that crosses the great lagoons and soon after passing through some small villages, they come out upon the sea and ride almost straight along its shores, to enter that miniature Genoa, called Bastia, some two hours before mid-day.

Barnes pilots his companion to the Hôtel de France. "You should like this inn," he observes; "it's on the Boulevard Paoli."

Catching sight of a gentleman in a tall hat and a swallowtail coat, Barnes says: "These are the only ones in Corsica, I think, and that's Monsieur Staffe, the head of the hotel. I know him. Now we'll get news of your wife; she's probably put up here."

So they spring off their horses and dear old Monsieur Staffe, recognising the American, remarks: "Hola, Mr. Barnes of New York!" then adds with a smile: "*Ciel*, it's lucky I remembered you, or I

would have suspected you were a bandit from our mountains."

And Barnes looks like one. The dust of two days' travel is heavy on him; his hair is unkempt; his eyes glare from their sockets made hollow by fatigue. Edwin looks scarcely better, though his appearance is that of a sailor on a cruise ashore.

Monsieur Staffe is about to offer them rooms when they both suddenly question him and learn to their concern that no lady has arrived from the interior this day at his hotel.

"She is drawn by two horses driven by an old Corsican with a beard several weeks old," says Barnes.

"It doesn't matter how she was driven; no lady has arrived here, gentlemen."

"Then Marina must have gone to inquire at the steamer offices as to when I'll arrive," cries Edwin.

"*Mon Dieu!*" ejaculates old Monsieur Staffe, his eyes lighting up, "you are the young English naval officer whose wedding to Mademoiselle Paoli created such an excitement in the island two weeks ago. Believe me, *Monsieur*, your wife is not in Bastia, or I should have heard of it. Everybody here honours the name of Paoli—and your sweet spouse is very much loved for her own dear self."

Despite Monsieur Staffe's assertions, the two young men stride out of his hotel, and though des-

perately fatigued, make inquiries at the offices of the Fraissinet and the Florio Ruballinio companies, but no lady asking for arriving boats has been there, at all events, none answering Marina's description.

"She may be on the quay waiting for me," suggests Edwin, anxiously. So the two patrol the landing place, where the sea air doesn't seem to elevate the sailor's spirits. He looks disconsolately at the statue of Napoleon and mutters: "Hang it, she hasn't hove in sight;" then gasps in frightened tone: "My Lord, if anything has happened to her!"

"We may have passed her on the road," remarks Barnes sympathetically, his anguish making him feel for his companion. "We'll give her two hours to come in and overtake us—two hours of rest," the poor fellow stretches his limbs wearily. "I'm flesh and blood, Anstruther. You didn't climb mountains all yesterday, as I did."

But Edwin, being unaccustomed to horseback exercise, though wiry enough upon the ship's deck, is stiff and sore. Compelled from very fatigue, the young men contrive to limp back to the Hôtel de France, where they are very well taken care of, and two hours' sleep measurably revives them. Barnes has had a shave and would look almost debonair when he comes down to breakfast at noon, but the cavities which hold his eyes abnormally brightened

by anxiety give the lie to any appearance of lightness.

Anstruther is even more worried than before—and now as the day draws on, without his wife appearing, a look of fear comes into the young man's face that is horrible.

Gazing at him, Barnes mutters: "Are you good for another ride?"

"Yes—where?"

"We must take the back track," says the American. "We rode too rapidly this morning, thinking Marina was just ahead of us, for a critical investigation."

"Get under way," answers the lieutenant, and the two ride out of Bastia, making inquiries at every village and learning nothing.

In fact, the peasants, as they get nearer Ponte-alla-Lecchia, are too much excited over the election of the morrow to talk about much else. "Voting-day is to be enlivened by a race riot of the Luc-chese," says one whom Barnes is questioning on the highway just where the Morosaglia road leaves it leading to the Tuscan Sea. "It broke out strong to-day at Cervione and Orezza. Even the chestnut woods of Castagniccia didn't escape. If those Italian brutes come up here to-morrow, we are ready for them." He pats caressingly a long gun slung over his shoulder.

Edwin has dismounted and is slouching morosely about the road to ease his tortured legs.

"Why don't they wipe out these mutinous Lucchese?" says the officer in quarterdeck tones as they get on their horses again.

"Then the native Corsicans would have to work. These Lucchese come over here from Italy and do the manual labour for them. But I can find no trace of your loved one or of mine," adds Barnes, almost despairingly, as they ride along the road, their inquiries growing more close and persistent till they reach Corte.

Here, absolutely worn out, the two young men turn from the Hôtel Paoli and go into the Hôtel Pierracci. "Her old name on the other house drives me distracted," mutters Edwin, tears coming into his eyes.

Together, disconsolately, the poor fellows force themselves to try to eat. The election excitement is growing higher, a brass band comes past, at its head a placard "Vote for Saliceti!" and Barnes gnashes his teeth.

But turning from this, he rather curiously says suddenly: "Anstruther, you've got a flower in your buttonhole."

"Oh, yes, I was so miserable I hardly knew what I was doing. I picked up this crimson thing in the road when you were talking to the peasant who

was telling you of the Lucchese riots down at Orezza."

"There was no tree bearing the flower where you picked it up?" asks the American suddenly.

"No, I think not. I don't believe there was a shrub of any kind within a hundred feet of it. Why do you ask?" for the other's tone is excited.

"Why, because that's the cyclamen flower, one of the kind of which Marina bore whole branches in her carriage. Was there a branch attached to it?"

"I think there was. Hang it, I remember, I pulled it off. I—what are you driving at?"

"Well, could that flower have been dropped at the entrance of the Morosaglia road with design by your wife out of her carriage?"

The English seaman gasps for breath, but tired as he is and stiff as he is he staggers up and says hurriedly: "Come!" and the two, through the night again, for it has grown very dark, ride down to Ponte-alla-Lecchia.

"By Heaven, I wish we had hope of my sister also," says Edwin as they hurry along, though the poor sailor has difficulty in keeping himself in the saddle.

"I have a little," answers Barnes.

"You think Enid might be with Marina?"

"Yes, if Cipriano Danella has her. He apparently wants a chance at my life if Saliceti misses it.

He may have taken Enid to some out of the way place, so that striving to find her I may die in his vendetta."

Ponte Lecchia is full of excited men discussing the voting of the morrow. The wine shop being still open, everybody the night before election seeming to be thirsty, Mr. Barnes makes some guarded inquiry, but learns nothing except that very early in the morning the "Lucchese" had seemed to be extremely turbulent.

So he and Edwin walk their horses up to the junction of the Morosaglia Road.

"Did you find that flower here?" he asks Edwin.

"Yes, pretty well toward the middle of the path."

Though the moon has just risen, they can find no more cyclamen blossoms and here a sudden complication confronts them. Another road leading toward the northwest and running to Novella, Belgodere and the Ile Rousse, also leaves the Bastia road at the same point.

"It is just as probable that Marina's course was directed toward the northwest as toward the east. In fact, it is a toss-up which way your wife went," remarks Barnes. "Now, there is only one way to settle it, if this cyclamen flower means anything. That is for you to investigate one road and I the other."

So it is arranged that Barnes takes the road to-

ward the Ile Rousse, and Edwin follows the path leading to the east toward Morosaglia.

"If I find no more of these flowers going toward the northwest, I'll return here and follow you," remarks Burton.

After giving these directions, the American, desperately fatigued and mightily sleepy, jogs his steed in the direction of Ile Rousse, twenty miles to the northwest. In the moonlight, the distracted man, though he dismounts often, discovers no cyclamen flowers lying in the road. But as the road has been somewhat travelled, branches may have been brushed aside by the feet of mules and horses; he makes inquiries, and soon a passing peasant tells him that a lady driving two horses passed by ten hours ago. So he doggedly keeps on, hoping to find some of the flowers that may indicate he is following Marina.

"It's the only clue we have now to Marina, and it may lead me to Cipriano," he mutters, as he struggles to keep himself in the saddle.

Finally, arriving at Belgodere in the early morning, the lady with the two horses becomes a woman dragging two donkeys to Isola Rossa for the use of tourists; and learning from the innkeeper that no carriage has passed through, exhausted, worn out and disappointed, even Barnes succumbs to nature. He has been forty-eight hours under headway, thirty of these on horseback and eight of them climbing preci-

pices; and despite despair and anxiety, sleep claims him—the terrible sleep of utter exhaustion.

It is late when he opens his eyes again and with a start wonders where he is. He looks over the brilliant mountains, he sees the vines and only a few miles away, the waters beside which stands Isola Rossa. The innkeeper says "Breakfast, Signore," and serves him with crabs and lobsters from the Gulf of Fiorenzo. Mine host's little daughter places a bouquet of wild flowers on the table. In it gleams the red cyclamen. Barnes remembers and orders a fresh horse.

While this is being saddled he forces himself to eat. "Anstruther has not followed me," he reasons. "I'll have a long ride to overtake him and when we meet Cipriano Danella I want to be fit—to kill." Mounting a fresh steed, he gallops off, retracing his steps, all the time in his heart one question: "Where is my stolen bride?"

The night before, Edwin, turning to the east, begins to climb the awful hill leading to the Morosaglia. A few minutes after he has left the Corte road, in the faint glow of the coming moonlight, he springs off his horse and utters an exclamation of delight. As he pulls himself sailor fashion into the saddle, he has a branch of crimson flowers in his hand. He is not certain even now that they indicate Marina; though they have fallen from no overhang-

ing bough, only beech and Larriccio firs being near him, he knows cyclamen flowers are very common in the island, and the little barefooted boys and girls sometimes carry them in their hands.

For a moment his spirits are somewhat heightened, but as his horse continues to climb the terrible path, thinking of his own lost one, he grows gloomy; the mountains that border his way seem giant spectres dogging him. Then of a sudden the great moon shoots up and the clustering peaks sparkle like dazzling jewels—the Asco, a yellow topaz, distant Rotondo a blue diamond and Spolasca a red, flaming ruby. Hope springs up in him.

But a cliff shuts out these iridescent peaks, and he passes into the *macchia*, its dense shrubbery casting shadows on the dimly lighted path.

In the group of hamlets on the hillsides called Morosaglia, Anstruther does not pause.

But as he reaches the confines of the village, the young husband starts and his eyes, which fatigue had dulled, glisten with hope. Here are two paths, a trail leading to the north, the other and broader one pointing east toward the Tuscan Sea. Along the latter, cyclamen branches have been dropped several times in a short hundred yards.

Their number is significant, they have been strewn quite continuously from the forks of the road. "My darling's message to me," murmurs Anstruther, and

rides as hastily as his tired though wiry little horse will take him.

But the road is execrable, often very precipitous, and, when not soft with mud, full of boulders and sharp rocks.

Forty-eight continuous, racking hours of unremitting anxiety, twenty-four of which have been spent in the saddle, to which the sailor is unaccustomed, have told upon him. Though stiff in every limb and sore in every joint he finds himself nodding in his saddle. Once he nearly falls from it as his worn-out horse stumbles over a boulder. But the branches of the sweet-smelling posies he still encounters on the trail hurry him up hill and down hill, over running mountain streams, through wooded vales. Yet at least Nature must have its meed—despite all efforts of the rider, his head droops and his figure becomes lax in the saddle.

His steed with a whinny of joy almost runs down into a little valley and drawing suddenly up before a high campanile stone building, Anstruther falls off his horse into the arms of a good Monk of the Convent of Piedicroce, who mutters: "Thank the Saints, you got here alive in time to drink the water of Orezza." For Anstruther's appearance between fearful fatigue and racking anxiety is now that of a man nigh onto death.

The hospitable friars put the invalid to bed and

at high noon the next day the invalid, after another glass or two of the famous youth-giving Orezza water, which here springs bubbling from the earth,* eats the noonday meal the good friars set before him, rises, gives them the blessing of a strong man and hurries on.

"He's a powerful, active sinner, but his face has assassination in it," whispers Father Clement to Father Ambrose, their eyes turned upon Anstruther as he rides down the hill and passes through the little village, where voting is now taking place.

As he gallops from the little hamlet, some cyclamen branches greet him, he urges on his steed.

And what a ride it is, under the great trees of La Castagniccia, where chestnuts big as eggs drop upon him, the giant chestnuts that fed Paoli's patriot army, the bread of Corsica, each dozen trees being a peasant maiden's marriage dower.

But though the woods are all chestnuts, Edwin still sees in his road cyclamen branches, slightly withered now, their fragrance fading, and hope grows higher in his heart.

So he rides along the parklike vales of La Castagniccia, and before him is the green of the great Ba-

*The wonderful restorative virtues of Orezza water are such that in Corsica it is almost considered the fountain of youth. The French Government send their soldiers invalided with the Tonquin fever to it and in a fortnight nearly all of the stricken soldiers have regained their health.—Editor.

vella Forest fading away down the hillsides toward the distant and still unseen Tuscan Sea.

Here Edwin checks his horse, springs off and picks up a cyclamen branch, and as he rides along, looking at the flowers, suddenly ejaculates: "Jove, how fresh their perfume and plucked two days since."

But the lately cut flowers give no warning to the sailor; he is too eager now. Pausing at the little village of Pietra, Edwin steps into the inn to ask some questions and hears news that makes him frenzied.

The landlord, delighted at his liberal hand, tells him to avoid the communal where the voting is going on. "'The Lucchese' have got full of wine and are having a riot in that direction. They are perfect devils, these fellows from Lucca over across the sea that Danella imported to work upon his estates here."

"Count Cipriano Danella has estates here?" asks Edwin excitedly.

"Yes, now it is Cipriano. Down toward Cervione, where the cliffs run into the sea, the only place where it is not sickly and they have no lagoons. You can know it by the Genoese watch tower that was in ruins, but the Count some years ago had repaired and made habitable."

"It's curious I never heard anyone mention Cipriano's properties here," mutters the sailor.

"Oh, possibly not. Till a fortnight since, they belonged to Musso Danella, the dead one, but Count Cipriano has now taken possession of them."

"He is there?"

"Why, I think so. A boy who came up the pass yesterday said the new Count had come there in a vessel."

"He is there at present?"

"Quite sure!" laughs the man. "Cipriano himself rode through here yesterday escorting a lady with some of his followers."

"Aha, in a carriage driven by an old Corsican?"

"She was in a carriage, but was not driven by an old Corsican; a boy whipped the horses."

"She was young and beautiful?"

"My eyes are old, I could not see well, Signore. The carriage came rapidly past me, three or four riding about it. The lady looked as if she would say some words; she rose almost as if to spring out, but something in the carriage seemed to check her, and they whipped up the horses. Oh, Signore, how terrible you look!"

"The quickest way to Cipriano's estates?" asked Anstruther hoarsely.

"Down the road there, through the forest, over two ranges of hills and his land begins. But be careful how you go that way; the 'Lucchese' are just beyond the village. Hear them? They are

rioting now," as Neapolitan outcries and Tuscan execrations and oaths and the rattle of stones are heard further to the east. "Best take a by-path."

Edwin takes the road pointed out to him; he wishes no delay with these Italian workmen, whom, imported in great numbers into the island, the Corsicans would probably butcher to a man did not their natural laziness make them prefer to let the "Lucchese" live and work for them.

But the by-path doesn't rid him entirely of the "Lucchese." Just after he has left the village he finds himself confronted by some hundred Italian workmen, who threateningly demand drink money, and unfortunately noting the cyclamen flower in the sailor's hand, the red being the colour of the candidate they do not favour, they rush at him with upraised pitchforks and scythes.

But the Lieutenant, remembering Napoleon's recipe for mobs, pulls out his pistol. Dodging one volley of stones, some of which come dangerously near to him, he dashes on, and there are two wounded "Lucchese" as he rides away—and three empty cylinders in his revolver.

Here a broken cyclamen branch makes him forget all else, and riding hurriedly, after some hours of mountain vistas, he reaches a little hill and gazes at a view which causes him for one moment to pause. The dark emerald of the woods descending quite

rapidly, reaches the paler emerald of the sunlit Tuscan Sea. Far out upon it, straight to the east, is, like a speck of flame in the sun's last declining rays, the little Isle of Monte Cristo dedicated to eternal romance by the great Dumas; further to the left are Pianosa and Elba, where Napoleon dreamed of reconquering the world before Waterloo and St. Helena.

Few sails are on the quiet waters of the tropic sea, though a sailing fisher craft of some burden is anchored off the shore.

But what holds most strongly the hungry eye of Edwin Anstruther is the foreground of this wondrous picture.

Running into the gentle waves about half a mile from him is a cliff, topped by a fairy green of foliage; upon it stands a ruined turret. Its time-stained stones indicate it had been a watch tower of the Genoese in olden days and that from its top centuries ago had flamed beacons warning the fleeing people that the galleys of Barbary pirates were ravaging these shores. The mass of ruined masonry rising above the foliage has been now apparently repaired. The Englishman sees the sheen of glass in some of the little loop-holed windows. Beside it on the same cliff some fifty yards away is a comfortable Corsican farmhouse, increased by a long modern addition whose windows are large and whose portico

is spacious. Of a sudden he thinks he sees a white hand waving some piece of woman's lingerie from the tower, and gallops down the road, careless of all except that it may be his wife. Though it is nearly dusk, the cyclamen flowers still greet him with their perfume. He rides across a little bridge that spans a chasm awful in its depth through which the sea rushes. It is light enough to see very indistinctly, and he finds himself on a lawn planted with ilex, citron and orange trees. On one side is the farm-house; on the other the lone Genoese tower.

Some broken branches of cyclamen flowers lead him toward the turret. A light is now streaming from its upper story. Riding his horse to the low-arched masonry that is the entrance to the lower story, he springs off to alight upon cyclamen blooms. The odour of the flowers issues from the building itself.

The heavy oaken doors of the entrance are open invitingly, but he scarce notices them. There is only one thought in his heart: "Is my wife upstairs?"

With his revolver ready in his hand, he dashes rapidly up the circular stone stairway, upon which open little loopholes. After nightfall, these give him no light. But the illumination of a lamp or candle comes down the stairway as he passes higher up. He calls: "Marina, are you there?" and enters the chamber at the top of the tower.

It is lighted by a lamp and fitted up for occupancy. There is a little bed in it, some old chairs and an oaken table. Upon the bed are a bunch of cyclamen flowers and articles of woman's apparel. He flies to examine them. They are not those of his wife.

Upon the table is an envelope addressed:

"Lieutenant Edwin Gerard Anstruther."

Its contents, written in the same hand as that of Marina's letter, makes the young man's eyes roll in his head:

"Mon Cher Anstruther:

"I have been watching your coming, over the hills, following the cyclamen flowers the charming Marina so astutely dropped into the path to bring you here—and am prepared for your visit.

"I thought you would be attracted to the light in this chamber when all else was dark.

"As you read this you are already trapped.

"Do you think I will spare anyone who brought about my brother's death? Ask Tomasso, who is already gone.

"Do you imagine, English Lieutenant, who call yourself husband to the woman I have decreed shall be mine, that you shall be scathless——"

The sharp clang of the doors below makes Edwin drop the letter and spring like a topman down the stairs.

Though he is quick, somebody is quicker. The strong doors are closed. As he reaches the lower step, he hears steel bars falling into their sockets

outside. From without a jeering laugh makes him know this has been planned. This is confirmed by the creaky turning of a great key.

"Unlock this door!" he commands in quarterdeck tones.

"*Diable*, not after having had so much trouble to trap you," is returned in almost Parisian French.

Without a word Anstruther discharges his revolver into the lock of the door. He has exhausted his three remaining cartridges, when the impingement of the bullets shows that the lock is protected by steel and his attempts abortive.

He is interrupted by loud cries of terror from almost beneath his feet: "Hang it, quit that shooting! Do you want to blow us up? I saw that scar-faced chap shove sticks of nitroglycerine all around in the crevices. This tower's mined, and that tarnation scoundrel has got a fuse or electric wire running to it."

His own language with a Yankee twang coming from below startles Edwin. He has some matches in his pocket; strikes one, looks round and sees a trap door in the flooring almost beneath his feet. He pulls it up and peers down. His eyes glare into those of another man gazing up from an underground vault. Holding the match so that he can see the face he gasps: "Great guns, Emory! I thought you dead!"

"I'm nigh onto dead," growls the detective, Edwin, almost stunned by surprise, gazing at him petrified. "By the living Jingo, where's Barnes? I guessed some of you'd find me out," adds the Pinkerton man in relieved voice. "I reckoned you'd rescue a chap who's been risking his life and getting a good deal the worst of it in your employ."

"I came to find my wife," cries Edwin shortly. "Have you seen her?"

"Oh, there's a lady, I think, in the house."

"In the house? And they have cooped me up in this tower." Anstruther frantically assaults the door again.

"Oh, I reckoned they'd be doing something underhand to you," calls Emory. "Come down and help me out first."

"Why don't you come up? There's a ladder."

"I can't. Dash it, they've got leg irons on me. They feed me on soup and bread and don't even leave a spoon with me to dig out. I was seized and smuggled from St. Tropez in that darn fishing craft that followed your yacht just the moment I had it fixed so I'd hear their plans. They're crafty as snakes."

"A Pinkerton man like you captured in this disgraceful way!" says Anstruther sternly. For he thinks had Emory kept his eyes open and done his duty, Enid would have escaped abduction and the rest never have come to pass.

"Oho, hang it, what have they done to you, smarty?" growls the detective angrily. Then he cries: "Glory hallelujah! Bully for you!" for Edwin has run down the ladder and is busy trying to unloosen the irons from the American's legs.

"They've got keys somewhere," snarls Emory. "Hang it, think of their cheek, manacling a detective."

Edwin is up the ladder again. He strikes another match and on the ground story finds, after some little delay, a bunch of keys hanging on the wall.

After some trouble with the locks, which are rusty, Elijah's legs are released and he ascends with Edwin, his jaws almost snapping with rage as he tells his wrongs.

"I was playing the fisherman at St. Tropez," he says. "I had got onto them, all right. I knew the head devil, the elder man, Cipriano, when, like a darn fool, I went on board of that big, cursed fishing felucca to them, pretending to want to get a job, thinking I would find out what the devil they were driving at. That was the end of me. I hadn't more than got in the forecastle than I was covered with two long knives, and that scar-faced fellow said to me: 'The first time, you were warned to keep out of this affair. This is the second time——' They were savage enough to kill me, but they simply corded

me up and threw me in the hold, and oh, what a time I had as their infernal vessel dashed about the Mediterranean after you. When they gave up chasing you they stopped here and put me away carefully in that hole down there."

Suddenly he cries: "What are you doing?" for Edwin has his hands in an iron ring and is trying to pull up another trap door in the flooring.

"I want tools by which we can break enough masonry from one of these embrasures to get out!" says the sailor.

But pulling up the trap door, both he and the American gaze astounded into the other vault.

Two red flaming eyes encounter theirs. "If you come to kill me, I'll die like a Corsican, my teeth in your throat!" cries a low, hoarse voice.

Then as Anstruther lights another match, a shriek rises to them: "The husband of Marina, *Madre di Dio!*"

"Tomasso!" exclaims Edwin, adding: "In God's name, where is my wife?"

"*Diavolo*, of course, you have come here to find her. At the fork of the Bastia Road, I thought the 'Lucchese' captured my mistress and myself and forced us to drive toward the east. Coming over the mountains, their language told me they were not 'Lucchese,' but Corsicans. I would have told Marina, but when I got out to water the horses at the

little fountain up near Pietra, two of them struck me insensible and I awoke and found myself here. But, Signore, I beg you to note one thing. Your true wife and my honoured mistress believes she was rescued from the 'Lucchese' by Cipriano Danella, and she is grateful to him. Get me to the light that I may aid you." The old Corsican has faintly staggered up; a moment later he is pulled from the vault by the strong hands of Anstruther and the detective.

"This is old Tomasso Monaldi," says Edwin shortly, "who was supposed to be killed."

"Holy smoke, the fellow who was believed dead and they vendettaed Barnes about!"

"Yes."

But Tomasso's words make them feel they have little time to lose. Besides, Emory is always whispering with white lips: "This tarnation tower is mined!" Together they go up the stairs, carefully examining every orifice in the building, but find them all loopholes too small to permit the exit of a man, and the masonry too solid to be broken through in any ordinary time, as the building is bare of tools and weapons.

"There is nothing but to get out of the upper chamber," says Edwin. "I'm a sailor. With half a chance, a single vine, with even the assistance of our clothes torn into lengths, I can scramble down. Some way I'll do it."

They have reached the upper room. Anstruther has thrown off his coat and vest, kicked off his shoes and taken off his stockings. Toes will cling to the rough stonework better than boots. He picks up the letter and the concluding sentences seem to make him crazy. He springs to the window and a muttered oath parts his white lips, for he encounters a grillage of heavy iron so securely fastened on the outside that it is impossible for him to make exit.

But even as Edwin struggles with the grating, he utters a low cry, half of longing, half of despair.

Upon the portico of the modern portion of the farmhouse, pleasant with vines and flowers, almost reclining in a hammock is Marina. Robed in white, the young wife looks like a dream of love to her despairing husband. Her face is flushed, if not happily, at least excitedly. To her, speaking—the distance is too great for Edwin to understand the words, but apparently from the gestures they are those of amity—is Count Cipriano Danella, his eyes sparkling vivaciously, his costume the romantic one of Corsica.

CHAPTER XVII

WHIFFS IN THE AIR

Some time after mid-day, Mr. Barnes, in pursuit of Anstruther, reaches Ponte-alla-Lecchia, where the people are now crowding about the polling house. He doesn't stop here and continues rapidly on, notwithstanding the sun is very hot, the dust is very heavy. As he climbs the high hills toward Morosaglia, he commences to find cyclamen flowers, quite faded now and having but little perfume.

"By Jove," he remarks, "I gave Edwin the right path. I should have turned back and followed him last night, not to-day."

This makes him hurry all the more, and his horse is quite exhausted when he descends the hill past the convent and pauses at the little inn near the famous waters of Orezza.

The American has heard of their curious powers, and asks for some, as he gazes languidly on the communal of the little village, around which the men are still clustering.

The heat has been tremendous; his speed has been quite great; the hills have been precipitous. Barnes's face is again covered with lines of fatigue.

"This glorious Orezza water will make you a new

man," chats the landlord pleasantly; and never had the wondrous youth-giving-chalybeate a better patient to work upon, for as the effervescent fluid, cold from the springs of the mountains, flies down the American's throat, new power, new vigour seem to enter each nerve, each limb.

As Burton mounts his steed, the innkeeper, taking his charge from him, noting that the lines of fatigue have left his customer's face and his eyes have become normal and brilliant, says: "These are wondrous waters, are they not? We only charge three ha'pence a drink. But," he adds, "*diavolo*, they don't cure everything, though some people think so. I said to a gentleman who was here yesterday: 'They won't take out that scar.'"

"What kind of a scar?" asks Barnes indifferently.

"A scar over his left eyebrow. He'd be a pretty fellow without it." Here the innkeeper sets up a scream: "Marvellous, the water has made him crazy!" for Barnes has kicked the sides of his horse so vigorously that the animal is bounding away at full speed.

It is now quite late in the afternoon. He soon passes the chestnut lands of La Castagniccia, still finding a few faded cyclamen blooms to guide him on his way. But now a little shock thrills him. He checks his horse abruptly, springs off and picks up a bunch of the wild-flowers. As he rides along ex-

amining it he ejaculates: "This is very extraordinary. This branch, which I supposed Marina dropped out of the carriage yesterday, was certainly cut this very morning."

Suspicion flashes through him as he questions: "Can these flowers have been strewn in the road by Cipriano's agents to lead someone on?" and what had been no warning to the easy-going sailor becomes a danger signal to the man of the world.

Yet, twist it how he will, Barnes can see no reason why Danella should want anyone near him save Marina. If the Corsican's passion for that young lady is what he thinks it is, he will prefer a free hand to deal with her alone. "And yet it is evident somebody wanted somebody to follow this cyclamen trail, and whether somebody wants it or not, I am here anyway," thinks the American grimly. "And thanks to the divine Orezza water, I am rather fit for fighting." Then carefully examining his revolver, the pistol shot remarks: "And that's fit also, thank God."

With this, resolutely but more circumspectly, Mr. Barnes continues his way over the path marked by the cyclamen branches. It is dusk when he passes Pietra, fortunately avoiding any trouble in its streets, though there is much wine flowing and rioting in the little hamlet, the "Lucchese" being still in force.

By the time he has come out on the hills looking down toward the Tuscan Sea, it is very dark. There is no moon yet, but the light from the lone watch tower attracts him. The cyclamen flowers he occasionally picks up make him know this is the road Anstruther must have travelled.

Suddenly, but quietly, he turns his horse from the path, and in the seclusion of a thicket of wild grapes, listens. Some dozen men are coming from the east; he hears one of them growl: "Why, there's no 'Luccheše' nearer than Pietra to fight, though the Count ordered every man about the farm to go out and protect the vines from them."

"Well, there's some good reason for Maestro Cipriano's orders. Perchance the Italian labourers in the Green Orezza quarry have risen up," adds another.

"Perhaps with the lady he wishes not to be disturbed," giggles a third. "The Count has musicians in a boat off the shore."

The men have no sooner passed than Barnes starts quickly down the road. The "lady," he guesses, means either Marina or his own bride, though of the last he has slight hope. A subdued light from the town guides him in the darkness.

But when he is within less than a hundred yards of the building, his horse, with a sudden snort of terror, draws up right in the path, crouching on

his haunches, and Barnes peering over his steed's head, gazes into the deep chasm that descends sheer to the very sea. Springing from his trembling horse, the American finds that the bridge, which is a light, swinging one not over thirty feet in length, has been swung to the other side.

The scent of a fresh cyclamen bloom enters his nostrils. He looks at the removed bridge and remarks acutely: "It's evident Cipriano has got on the other side the person he wished to follow these flowers."

So Barnes gazes across the chasm he cannot pass. The night being very still, he hears over the soft murmur of the waves beneath him the sweet romantic music of Corsica rising from a boat. 'Tis the playing of stringed instruments accompanying a sweet native love song, each stanza ending in that curious prolonged note peculiar to these island ditties.

"What the deuce is that bizarre, crafty devil's game?" wonders the American. Then he hears voices from the low Corsican house. Beyond the crevice, he sees Marina in white robe amid the lights and flowers of the veranda. Her sweet tones are scarce audible. Then Danella's voice reaches him faintly in the soft night air.

He begins to understand, and mutters: "Good God!"

After a little a cry of love yet despair rends the

heavens from the tower. It is Anstruther's. 'Tis mingled with a woman's shriek for mercy. "My husband!" in Marina's voice.

Next Barnes hears Cipriano's suave, triumphant laugh, and he mutters: "My God, for a pistol it's a fearfully long shot, but it's the only way!"

He examines carefully his revolver, judges the wind, which is fortunately very languid. Hastily he selects a spot with a good line of sight and stands waiting—waiting for the chance; for intervening vines trouble him, and the foliage of a great orange tree, standing alone in the garden and midway between the house and the turret, jumbles the light, which is only the faint sheen of the rising moon, and Mr. Barnes now knows that in a very little time he must shoot quick as lightning and straight as a bee's flight, to save a man's life or a woman's honour from a being subtle as Machiavelli and remorseless as Beelzebub.

. . . . .

Slightly before this, Marina had been sitting on the long verandah of the Corsican farmhouse, the lighted lamps placing some tinges of ruby in her dark brown hair and giving colour to the light semi-mediæval costume that enhances her loveliness, for the heat being great and her dress of the journey dusty from the road, the Count has found, rummaging over some antique finery in the ancient house, an

old summery Corsican robe of sheer muslins and some Venetian lace for the decking of "his lady guest," as he now calls her.

The faint yet delicious music of her native land rising to her from the sea takes the young Corsican lady's mind to romance. Her southern heart is sighing for her husband—the song from the boat is an old time heroic ballad of a woman's sacrifice for the bandit she adores—how, to save her fugitive lover from capture by gendarmes, she has given herself to the arms of a brigadier, then slain herself and him. Marina's glorious eyes are full of tears. In her hand is a cyclamen flower plucked from a shrub beside the balustrade, and the crimson of the bloom vies with the blushes on her cheeks, for she is thinking: "Are the flower branches bringing Edwin nearer my arms?"

Quietly entering from the house, Cipriano Danella, costumed in the old time, romantic Corsican garb, gazes upon the graces of the exquisite girl outlined by the light costume, for, only thinking of her coming husband, Marina is in careless attitude and the short skirts display ankles and feet of faultless proportions. Noting the glories of her changing face in which romance is heightened by ideal love, Copriano mutters to himself: "There must be some taint in this Danella blood of mine which makes it riotous. *Diable*, to this woman to whom I should

give death for my brother's assassination, I give a frenzied passion. But I have thought it out. 'Tis accurate as an equation. The more she loves this husband of hers, the more certain her beauty is mine! *Per Cupidon,* our little nuptial supper is in that very room!" The elation of amatory triumph inflames him.

The eagerness of his glance draws Mrs. Anstruther's eyes to him. She looks up and says: "Ah, Count Cipriano, it was very noble of you, who I had feared would hate me, to rescue me from the 'Luchese.' At your advice, I have rested here, but tomorrow, notwithstanding the romantic serenade you have provided for me, I must go on to Bastia."

"Oh, yes, to Bastia," murmurs the Count softly, and stepping nearer, says suavely, though there is a weird suggestion in his voice that somewhat disquiets the lady: "We are alone here in my old farmhouse, only old Martha, the cook, who, far away, will snore till dawn, and my nephew, Count Enrico."

"I haven't seen him," remarks the girl uneasily.

"*Parbleu,* you did *once,* the gentleman with the scar upon his face, the one who delivered the letter that caused your nerves to jump in the Marseilles railroad station. Even now his name seems to have an ill effect upon you," for Marina has started up, and the fluttering of her light skirts shows her limbs are trembling.

"*Mia Madre*, was *he* the man?" she shudders. "And was it you who penned it?" Then some divination entering her mind, she implores pathetically: "Holy Virgin, no harm has come to Edwin? Have I not kept the cruel pact? Have I not deserted my dear husband? It was the promise of that awful letter that no evil should come to Edwin if I left his arms."

"Ah, but you intended to return to them, *bella mia*," smiles the gentleman.

The young wife scarcely heeds the insinuation of the subtle Italian term, but stammers confused: "Why do you think that?"

"*Ma foi*, you were journeying to Bastia to meet your husband, lured there by a telegram I directed to be sent to you from that place," whispers the Count significantly.

"The telegram was false? Edwin is not in Corsica? Edwin is safe? *Madre di Dio*, I thank thee!" Marina's voice rings with a hope that produces a supreme joy in Cipriano's occult mind.

This lady upon whom he has set his fervid heart, is courage personified as regards her own safety, but the great love she bears this Englishman makes her timid for him. 'Tis Danella's plan to use for its own destruction this generous and mighty love.

"That's what I wish to discuss with you," he

observes quietly, gazing upon a face to which each wave of passion adds such loveliness that he cannot restrain the monstrous proposition on his tongue. It breaks forth. "My poor brother loved you, but you gave him *death*," he whispers passionately. "I love you, but, *per Baccho*, you will not give me death—but *love!*"

"Love? Impossible!" Marina starts from him wildly; then scorn coming to her eyes and voice, remarks haughtily: "You are speaking to a wedded wife, Monsieur."

"Not *legally* wedded, I have hopes. My brother, poor Musso, perchance by his lips in private gave his consent to your nuptials, but of that I have no proof. There is no written document. You are still a child—but twenty—according to the French law, you cannot wed without the consent of your guardian for several years. Anstruther, in his careless English way, thought not of it; you were too eager for his wooing to note the omission. By my poor brother's death, his authority as your guardian passes to me."

"Pish! I was wedded in Musso's very presence," answers the girl, proudly; then cries: "I am Edwin Gerard Anstruther's wife, by the Church and by my love."

"*Ohime*, 'tis a pity; you compel me to make you his *widow*."

"*Misericorde*, Edwin's widow?" At that awful word, Marina shudders and sinks overcome into a chair.

"Listen to me!" Cipriano's voice is deep with menace, yet soft with passion. "On the further cliff down the coast are quarries of dazzling-hued green Orezza marble that is taken from this island to deck palaces."

"Orezza marble, what has that to do with Edwin's life?" half scoffs the girl.

"But it may have something to do with his death," observes Danella. "For the blasting of the rock is used much dynamite. I have robbed the quarries and have mined the base of yonder turret with the explosive. In it are three men: one, old Tomasso, whose knife entered my brother's heart; the other, an American detective who has placed his Yankee nose into this vendetta, unfortunately for himself. Emory is in that turret. You will give something for these men's lives?"

"For Emory and dear old Tomasso? Certainly —anything in reason." The lovely eyes are filled with a strange alarm.

"Ah, but it must not be *in reason*—it must be in a passion as exalted as my own—for you. When I direct my nephew, who is bound to me not only by ties of blood, but of gratitude, and who is inflamed against you all by his oath of vendetta for the mur-

dered Musso, he will light the fuse leading to the mine, and puff!—that tower, with every man who's in it, goes into the air!"

"Murderer!" shudders Marina, who has listened astounded.

"Ah, you have sympathy for these poor fellows! That is well; I shall love you more for your tender heart," continues Cipriano softly.

"But the law!" half screams the lady.

"Pah—in Corsica—in a vendetta. Besides, the blown-up tower will be thought but another outrage of the rioting 'Lucchese.' Oh, this is no worse than dagger thrusts or blows from bullets which always come in a blood feud. And in that mined turret," Cipriano's voice is low but terrible, "there is another man, who following the cyclamen flowers you dropped in the road and a few more we added to lead him into that fatal tower——"

"Edwin!" Marina's limbs hardly uphold her.

"The man you foolishly call husband." The finger of the suave wooer points to the turret's upper floor.

Then the game is on!

Her eyes following his gesture, a shuddering cry, low, broken, despairing yet full of tenderest love, issues from the girl's lips that have now become white as death itself: "Edwin, my husband—my flowers brought you to *this*—following for love of me——"

"He is caught like a rat in my trap!" smiles the Count.

"Not without warning, wretch!" She would spring from the verandah and run over to the base of the tower and call up to the man whose face she sees outlined against the grillage of the upper window, through whose iron bars he is struggling to force his way.

But Cipriano's strong hand clutches her white arm; he pulls her back into the seat and commands: "Not until you've heard my words, which may save his life!"

"His life? Tell me!"

The soft, sweet melody of voices from the sea relates woman's immolation on love's altar. And she, turning upon him agonised eyes blazing with devotion to her spouse, her white bosom beating high above the laces of her robe, her slender hands clenching and writhing in her agony, her face, which had been pallid as a death mask, growing gradually redder and redder till it flames, a volcano of a woman's shame, listens.

"I have explained you are not legally this man's spouse," Cipriano's voice is trembling with desire. "*Become mine!* I had purposed in Nice to give you a very cruel death for what you had to do with my brother's killing, but when I saw your beauties and knew that the little child I had once seen had grown

into a Venus, but no marble one, to myself I said: '*Corpo di Baccho,* 'tis in the blood of the Danellas to love this woman. I am enamoured of her as wildly as poor dead Musso. 'Tis a mediæval idea: instead of slaying her, I'll have revenge in winning her—against herself, the wife—also against the husband."

"Not against Edwin! You have no cause of hate against him."

"Vendettas are caused by love as well as hate! He dares to call you wife. Each moment my eye rests upon you increases thy sweetness to me. You are Corsican—so am I—no foreigner should stand between us."

"Holy Virgin, you expect me to *love* you?" stammers the girl.

To this he answers with Machiavellian subtlety: "Of course not now, but that may come in time. At present you love Edwin! Because of this devoted love—to save this gentleman you adore—you give yourself to me."

At his hideous mathematics the girls utters a cry of horror.

"If you would save the life of this Englishman whom I should dispatch by my oath of the vendetta, at once your kisses!"

"Would Edwin wish to live, his wife untrue? Monster!" Marina's face blazes with shame.

"Oh, no, not monster; simply a man who has gone

crazy for thee. Understand, if you are mine, the man in that tower lives. To-night on the vessel that is anchored here, I'll bear you away to some far distant isle of Greece."

"My husband would follow us forever!"

"Not if he knew you were faithless! 'Tis not their English way. A woman who is dishonoured is no more to them than a tainted orange."

"Dishonoured in his eyes? NEVER!" cries the girl. "I'd sooner you killed him—sooner you killed me, *much!* I'm in your power; I'm alone here, helpless in your hands. Kill me. Let my darling go."

As Danella has clutched her, the old neck fastenings of the ancient gown have given way; she plucks its laces further apart over her dazzling bosom and begs: "Bury your stiletto here; but spare my husband."

Her pose only makes her the more alluring to his devouring eyes.

"What, kill the being I adore!" shudders Cipriano. "I have no stiletto and I have taken care no knife is near your desperate hands, my lady. Besides, I'll never let you go. If you will not leave your husband as his *wife*, leave him as his *widow*."

"Here, Enrico!" he calls.

The young cavalier with the scar above his eyebrow comes onto the verandah and says: "My uncle,

I honour thee, you have decided to give this woman death?"

"No; life—life and love! and death to those who stand between me and her! The torch to the lone orange tree in the centre of the lawn—you placed the fuse—when I give the signal to you, light it."

"He will be blown to atoms?" screams the girl.

"Certainly, then you are free to marry me and can say your prayers with a good conscience!" laughs the Count.

"My uncle, I am bound to your orders by the oath of the vendetta and thy promise to pay my gambling debts and make me rich again," said the young man. Enrico passes from the verandah and Marina sees the flame of the torch moving to the orange tree. She raises her voice and shrieks with all her force: "Edwin, my husband, you have only a minute to save your life. In some way, descend from the tower! They are going to blow it up!"

And a cry comes to her: "My wife, impossible!"

And over it are frantic curses from the American detective, and the voice of old Tomasso, croning: "It is the will of the Devil!"

Marina shouts: "I can only give you life by being this devil's!"

The answer of the young sailor comes, calm as the voice of an English officer should be facing death: "Not at that price, darling! Don't think of me!"

Then the tortured girl begins to wring her hands and sob as she sees the men in the tower struggling to break out, struggling as men in the turret of a sinking battleship. The face she adores is before her in its death agony—the weird music from the sea comes faintly to her, telling of woman's devotion, for the barbaric ballads have been selected with uncanny subtlety. For one dread moment, Marina wildly thinks: "I'll save my Edwin's life—then I'll keep myself from this crafty fiend by death in the waves from off the vessel on which he bears me away!" But the thought shoots through her: "My dear husband will believe I am a faithless and dishonoured wife!"

To Cipriano, who is triumphantly murmuring: "I see, by your blushes, you're mine!" she shouts: "Never!" and desperately would run to the base of the tower and die with her husband.

But the arms of Danella encircle her, holding her firm as bands of steel. Inflamed by the propinquity of her loveliness, the contact of the perfect figure he clasps, the subtle perfume of her waving hair that tosses in tresses about him, Cipriano is whispering: "You have still time. Anstruther may yet live, I have not given the signal. Be mine! But one long, sweet kiss to prove it."

"And never dare to look on the face of any true man or woman? No, no!"

Frantically she has broken from his arms; she is running towards the torch, desperately hoping to snatch it from the hands of the satyr holding it ready to apply it to the fuse.

After one unsuccessful step to overtake her swift feet, Danella cries savagely: "Fire the mine!"

Enrico, the fuse in one hand, the blazing torch in the other, is applying the flame to it.

There is a sharp whiff of the still night air like the faint snap of a distant whip and the man with the scar falls, as if struck from Heaven.

"*Diavolo*, what mystery is this? Myself to light the fuse!" cries Cipriano, and runs to the flambeau flaring on the ground.

But Marina, her eyes baneful with agony, mutters: "I am Corsican," and as he picks up the torch, the desperate girl seizes him with her delicate hands and struggles with him frantically.

But her slight strength is naught to that of his wiry frame. Danella picks up the torch. "Take your choice," he whispers. "The Englishman lives and you are my mistress; he dies, and you are my honoured wife!"

He is holding her down with one knee pressed on her. He is moving the torch slowly to the fuse; he is giving her a chance to save the life she loves by despairing surrender—he is giving himself just one more chance to win the beauty of the woman who

loathes him—when, even as the flame is flicking the fuse, another whiff rends the atmosphere, and from a spot midway between his longing eyes spouts something that is red in the torch flame, and with one shrill scream, "*Morte!*" Cipriano, springing high in the air, falls stark dead beside Marina's prostrate form.

The detective and Edwin are thundering at the tower door. Marina staggers to it, with a great effort turns the key and lifts up the steel bars, and stands faintly leaning against the stone masonry as Edwin, springing out, catches her in his arms.

"What did it? What wondrous thing wrought our deliverance?" he asks between kisses that make the girl wife think she is in heaven.

"By gum, was it lightning?" asks the detective, scratching his head. Then hearing a cry he runs down to the chasm and moves the swinging bridge into place across the crevice.

Over this comes Mr. Barnes, leisurely walking, humming the sweet romantic tune the minstrels are sending up from the distant sea.

Looking at the two dead men, Tomasso, in his old-time Corsican way, is saying solemnly: "'Tis the hand of God!"

But Marina, running to the American, cries: "*I* know the 'hand of God!'" and sinks down uttering blessings on the great pistol shot.

"By Goliah, 'tain't possible to do that with a revolver in this light," mutters Emory, pacing off the distance. "Holy smoke, you should be proud of them shots."

"It was that wondrous Orezza water that did it. That toned up my nerves after two days of devilish misery," remarks Burton modestly.

"But grub's what I'm thinking about," says Emory; "you haven't been fed on spoon-victuals for two weeks!" and he dashes into the farm-house.

Edwin, after slapping Barnes upon the back, has carried his wife, half-swooning now with joy, onto the verandah, when of a sudden, with a roar like that of a hundred-ton gun, the whole tower rises from its base and falls tumbling, a mass of ruined masonry, and on high there is a flight of rocks like fireworks. Fortunately the explosion has been so strong that the missiles nearly all fall into the sea, with great splashing of the water. They can hear the cries of terror from the minstrels in the boat as they hastily row away.

"My last shot wasn't quite quick enough," says the American dolefully. "Hang me, if Cip didn't get the torch to the fuse before he died." Then Barnes suddenly questions: "Where's my wife? Can't anybody tell me where is my wife?"

"She was not in that tower, anyway; that we

know," answers Edwin. "We examined every portion of it, trying to escape."

"Your wife?" cries Marina. "You should know! I left you going up the stairs to her chamber in Bocognano."

"She wasn't there?" mutters Burton.

"Wasn't there? My servant said she was there. Who was the lady?"

Barnes doesn't answer, but says moodily: "Then I've got to find Enid. My horse is just on the other side of the crevice."

"But you are too tired."

"I'm never too tired to find my best girl," says the poor worn-out fellow, trying to be cheerful, and steps down toward the bridge.

But from a distance a pretty feminine voice is heard crying excitedly: "This is the way to the explosion, young Signore Bellacoscia."

Then Barnes's voice rings, really happy for the first time in twenty-four hours: "Enid, that you? This way, little girl. Look out for the crevice," and his long sought for bride comes cantering across the bridge followed by two young bandits, who announce themselves as Conrad and Rodrigo Bonelli. The next second Enid has been lifted in Barnes's arms from the saddle.

"Where have you been all this time?" he asks eagerly.

"Following you ever since this morning, when the great Bellacoscia sent me on with these two gentlemen, his nephews, charging them with their lives to deliver me safe into your hands. I came from Bocognano."

"And where were you two nights ago when I was seeking you there?"

"I was asleep at Saliceti's home under the influence of a narcotic. Oh, mercy, don't look at me so," stammers Enid. "I was beneath the care of Saliceti's mother."

"Asleep under a narcotic?"

"Yes; when they were planning the ambush for you, I struggled so that Saliceti and his men forced an anodyne down my throat. When I became conscious, they told me that when the great Bellacoscia demanded my surrender Bernardo was afraid to explain to him, and some other woman was substituted for me. But when Saliceti learnt that Bonelli for his deceit had declared against him a vendetta that meant his certain death, he went to the great bandit, confessed and surrendered me to him. Whereupon, with many kind words, Bonelli sent me to his 'dear friend, Monsieur Barnes, of New York, the celebrated pistol shot.'"

"Oh, the most divine pistol shot upon earth," calls Marina, running out and embracing him. "By his skill, Burton has killed the man whose life forever

would have been a menace to us." Then gazing at Barnes, she laughs: "And I supposed you happy for the last twenty-four hours. You remember I left you going up to your wife's chamber in Bocognano."

"Going up to my chamber in Bocognano?" almost yells the young English bride. "I cannot understand; I was asleep under opium in charge of Saliceti's mother."

"Oh no, you were at my house. You were waiting for Burton in the guest chamber on the second floor. Mr. Barnes went up to you—— Good gracious, Edwin, don't! *Dio mio*, what are you squeezing my hand so for?"

"A word in private with you, Mr. Barnes," whispers Enid in suppressed tone.

Barnes, sheepishly muttering to himself, "Our first row," follows his wife into the shrubbery of the verandah, where they are quite apart.

"The lady who was substituted for me?" asks his bride haughtily.

"Sally Blackwood," answers Burton boldly.

"La Belle Blackwood! Good Heavens! What brought her there?" sudden tears springing up in Enid's blue eyes.

"She said she came to Bocognano to save my life from the vendetta. You remember she had warned me before, the other evening in Nice."

"Yes, I remember," she sighs; then adds more brightly, "I remember also, that *you told me.*"

Never up to this time has Barnes so thoroughly appreciated the latent nobility of his sweet bride.

She gazes at him anxiously, but only for a moment —the awful lines about her husband's face proclaiming his unremitting pursuit of her for three merciless days and nights softens Enid's tender heart. She slips one rounded arm about his neck and whispers: "I shall never question you about this. If you feel you can kiss me, Burton, kiss me!" and for this gets a kiss whose longing ardour makes her blush.

"Ah, that was an honest husband's kiss," she says rapturously, and for the speech receives another that makes her tremble with joy.

Running to Marina, she cries: "Fancy, it was that awful La Belle Blackwood, who wanted to save Burton's life."

"I am very glad she didn't want to save my husband's life," laughs Marina.

"The superb Madame Blackwood," cries Rodrigo Bonelli, who with excited exclamations has with his brother been examining Barnes's shots, "has received my great uncle's favour and is about to become his spouse. Let no one mention her name lightly."

"The great bandit's bride!" half shrieks Enid.

"The wife of the grand Antonio!" ejaculates Marina.

"Aye, and that is why we must soon take our leave. To-morrow is their nuptial day in Bocognano."

Then the ladies get to discussing this wondrous news, and Barnes, leading Edwin aside, whispers: "We must get the girls out of here quick. If we vamoose now, probably the explosion of the tower and those bodies will be attributed to the riotous 'Luchese.'" The American's tone is awed, he reflects that till this last dire episode of his life, no human being had ever fallen to his fatal pistol.

"By gum," remarks the detective, who is gaunt with much fasting, coming out of the house, "there was a fine supper for two setting there, with white flowers and champagne. I finished it all."

Marina's face flames. She knows for whom the nuptial supper was designed, and as Edwin suggests leaving, cries: "Yes, quick, from this awful place!"

"You're quite right—now get away smart—they may think it was bloody Italians," observes Emory, and makes himself useful helping the ladies down to the sea, to which some steep steps on the further side of the cliff lead them.

From a little jetty Barnes hails a boat that is apparently in waiting from the fishing vessel. To the captain of the craft who is in the boat's stern, he

cries: "The 'Lucchese' are making a row all along the coast. We must leave at once."

"Yes, the rocks that fell about us from the explosion told us that," answers the captain, anxious to leave this dangerous anchorage. But as the party board his boat, he mutters: "Count Cipriano and his nephew?"

"They are trying to protect their vines and crops from the 'Lucchese.' We are not to wait for them. You remember, the Count said a lady would be on board. Your charter money."

"Oh, yes," cries the captain, pocketing some bills, as his men row them to the fishing vessel, where he orders his sails set.

Barnes tells the skipper to steer to Villefranche harbour. As he turns away Emory edges beside him and whispers: "This is the infernal felucca, in whose hold I banged about from St. Tropez."

The two Bellacoscia have assisted the ladies to the deck.

"Now, gentlemen," asks Barnes of the young bandits, "what can I do for you for bringing me my wife?"

"You can give us the pistols that make incredible shots," answers one of the young men.

"By them we will kill many gendarmes," whispers the other.

"Sorry for the gendarmes, but the pistols go,"

laughs Barnes, and passes his weapons to these nice young bandits, who, after kissing the ladies' hands, take their leave with many words of gratitude and thanks.

"I fear I'm leaving murder behind me," sighs the American.

"Yes, nothing will cure this country but half a dozen railroads," remarks the detective. "Then you're able to get about and handcuff a man."

The vessel is soon under way, leaving the Corsican coast. The ladies, worn out with fatigue, are asleep in the little cabin, where there is only room for two.

As their husbands seated on the deck are smoking languidly their cigars, Barnes whispers to Edwin: "I rather imagine this vendetta is settled for good. Marina is again beloved by the people of her commune, and you will be honoured when you go back with her to visit her estates."

"And the Danellas?"

"Oh, I don't think there will be much said about them. The 'Lucchese' have been raising the devil in the last few days. Anyway, Cip had to be planted; he was the dangerous one; he was the money of the affair. You and I will be now able to walk down Piccadilly or Fifth Avenue and not squint over our shoulders—and if our brides disappear we'll seek for them at Delmonico's or the Langham,

and not at some Baxter Street rendezvous of the Black Hand or some Whitechapel haunt of foreign stiletto gentlemen."

On the following noon the felucca is anchored at Villefranche. As the party disembark at the pretty landing stage, Maud, running down the path, greets them with: "My, you are scarecrows!"

"Happy scarecrows!" cries Enid, as Barnes tenderly lifts her from the boat. Then they all go up to Lady Chartris's villa, followed by old Tomasso, contentedly smoking a pipe, and Emory in consultation with Barnes and Edwin as to silence in regard to the slain Danellas and bringing Graham and the *Seagull* back. In her parlour they are received with many sighs by Lady Chartris, who says mournfully: "I'm going back to London. Do you know that after that night you left, that wretched Cipriano has never visited me?"

To avoid discussing Danella, Enid and Marina run upstairs to get on civilised clothes, the former says.

"Oh, mama," cries Maud, breaking into the room with the Nice morning paper in her hand, "that detective is eating up everything in the house, and old Tomasso is chuckling over this telegram from Corsica: 'Saliceti, the vendetta man, is defeated for the chamber of deputies'—and—here's bad news for you, Barnsey—La Belle Blackwood is being married

this morning in Bocognano to the great bandit who kills so many, the one they call the Bellacoscia."

"Hush, my child," shudders her mother, "don't mention that horrible creature's name."

"Oh, I can speak of her now, mama, dear," remarks Maud, naïvely; "Blackey is now an honest wife."

"You bet Sally will make Bonelli a thoroughly honest wife," sneers Barnes in a whisper to Edwin. "No flirtatious glances at other mountain cavaliers, or the dagger in the back for both, biff! I reckon that kiss I gave Sally the other night in Bocognano is Sally's last outside kiss for a deuced long t-t-time."

The careless words gurgle in his throat. Enid standing in the conservatory, dressed in some light white carriage costume, looking like a fairy bride, cries sweetly but possessively: "Burton, I'm going to take you with me into Nice, *shopping!*"

"Oh, good Lord, now I know I'm married," laughs Mr. Barnes.

"Gee, you'll never be married really till you give me that bridesmaid present!" pouts Maud savagely.

Exquisite blushes rise to Enid's face.

"Right you are, Maudie," cries Mr. Barnes excitedly. "We'll get you the finest kind of gift this very morning."

"Oh, it must be something very handsome," an-

swers the bride enthusiastically. "We're going to be so happy."

Burton leads his wife to the victoria, puts her carefully in, seats himself beside her and says casually to Lady Chartris, who has come to the door with them: "By the bye, we shan't be back for a week."

"Oh, mercy, I—I have no baggage," falters Enid.

"Sent on ahead with Tompson."

"Where are you going to take me, dear?"

"To a nice little Swiss canton where there are plenty of mountains, but no bandits or vendettas. By the lord Harry, I'm tired of taking separate wedding tours," he adds savagely.

"Y-e-s, Burton." His beautiful wife snuggles a little closer to the ardent Barnes. Then she starts up with a little scream as an old slipper thrown by Maud nearly knocks off her hat, and Edwin and Marina from the window above are laughing and showering rice and flowers on her.

The sun is shining very brightly as Mr. and Mrs. Barnes of New York drive into Nice.

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